

# 2dartist

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106

Issue 106 | October 2014

**42**  
pages of  
top 2D  
tuition!

## Sketch a fantasy character

Design and sketch a character  
from your imagination...  
Justin Gerard shows you how!

## Paint powerful pin-ups

Kari Günther shares her creative  
workflow for digitally painting  
strong pin-up figures in Photoshop

### CREATE CREATURE CUSTOM BRUSHES

Rabie Rahou demonstrates  
top techniques for speeding up  
your painting process

**+plus**

- 10 of the best digital images
- Atomhawk Design's concept art
- Fantastical character drawings
- Build a scene with photos
- and much more!

# Breathtaking sci-fi concepts

Juan Pablo Roldan chats about the secrets  
behind his creative concepts



# Editor's Letter



**JESS SERJENT-TIPPING**  
Deputy Editor

## Welcome to 2dartist issue 106!

This issue blasts off with a stunning showcase of sci-fi concept art! Firstly from freelance concept artist, Juan Pablo Roldan, who impresses us with his futuristic illustrations and wealth of knowledge for creating awesome concepts for videogames, and secondly we share a selection of stunning artwork created by Atomhawk Design for the gargantuan space adventure, *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

We also have a host of sketchy goodness, as Brun Croes shares his sketchbook and Justin Gerard walks us through the steps taken to sketch a charismatic fantasy character from the imagination!

Whether you're painting pin-ups, herds of creatures, or using photos, there's a host of top images, tutorials, and resources to aid and inspire you. Enjoy!

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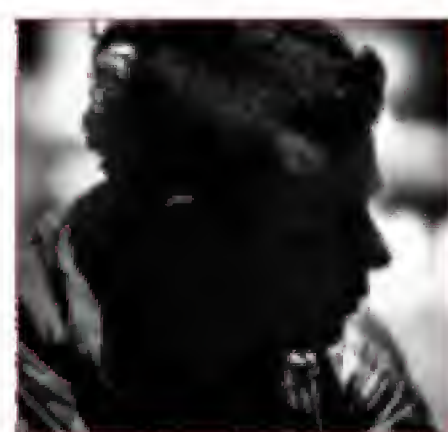
### RON ASHTIANI

Atomhawk is a world leading design studio, offering bespoke digital art solutions for the game, film and digital media industries. They provide outstanding concept art, intuitive user interfaces, and inspired animation.



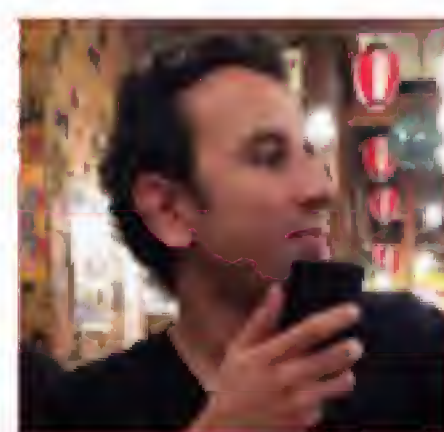
### KARI GÜNTHER

Kari Günther is an illustrator specializing in portrait and fantasy illustration. Using color and body language, Kari strives to unveil the human condition, with complex abstract thought through visual media.



### JUAN PABLO ROLDAN

Juan Pablo Roldan currently works as a freelance concept artist for various clients around the world. One of these is Hostage Films in New York, for which he is developing a series of concepts for an upcoming film.



### RABIE RAHOU

After more than 12 years in the computer graphics field, Rabie Rahou landed a job in Japan working as a senior visual developer and lighter, primarily on the cinematics for videogames.



### BRUN CROES

Brun Croes is a freelance illustrator and concept artist, whose specialties include character design, sci-fi, fantasy, environmental design, and visual development. He opens his awesome sketchbook.



### RENJU M.V

Renju.M.V is a concept artist and matte-painting artist. He currently works as a background artist at RockYou Media Group, Bangalore, India, and reveals how to transform the mood of your photographs.



### JUSTIN GERARD

From the moment that Justin Gerard first learned that crayons were meant for coloring and not eating, he has been drawing. He derives a inspiration from nature and human history, though his favorite source is story.



### WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT TO 2DARTIST?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: [jess@3dtotal.com](mailto:jess@3dtotal.com).



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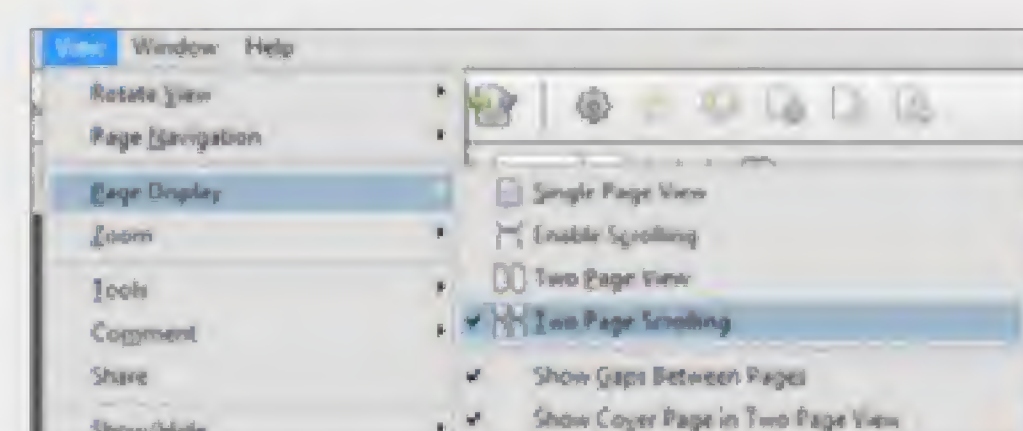
If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature within this magazine, then follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!

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For optimum viewing of the magazine, it is recommended that you have the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader installed. You can download it for free here: **DOWNLOAD**

To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2dartist magazine, you can set the reader to display "two-up", which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image:

1. Open the magazine in Reader;
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3. Select **Two Page Scrolling**, making sure that **Show Cover Page in Two Page View** is also selected.



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# Breathtaking sci-fi concepts

Freelance concept artist Juan Pablo Roldan talks with us about his inspirations and techniques, while divulging his experiences of creating creative and realistic concepts for videogames and films ▶





## The Artist



**Juan Pablo Roldan**

[jp-roldan.tumblr.com](http://jp-roldan.tumblr.com)

**Interviewed by:**  
Jess Serjent-Tipping

Juan Pablo Roldan currently works as a freelance concept artist for various clients around the world. One of these is Hostage Films in New York, for which he is developing a series of concepts for an upcoming film.



If you like sci-fi, you'll love the creative and realistic concepts of Juan Pablo Roldan. This Colombian artist is the creator of impressive futuristic illustrations where spaceships, giant cities and soldiers feature heavily. He left his graphic design job behind in 2011 to follow his dream of working in the film and videogame industry and soon landed his first role as a concept artist producing designs for Space Empire Games. Roldan chats with us about his journey, where he draws his inspiration from for his epic pieces, and experimenting with tools, techniques and style.

**2dartist:** Hi Juan, thanks for chatting with 2dartist today! First, could you tell our readers a little bit about yourself and your background in digital art? Where did it all begin?

**Juan Pablo Roldan:** I studied graphic design and worked for a total of seven years at two recognized advertising agencies.

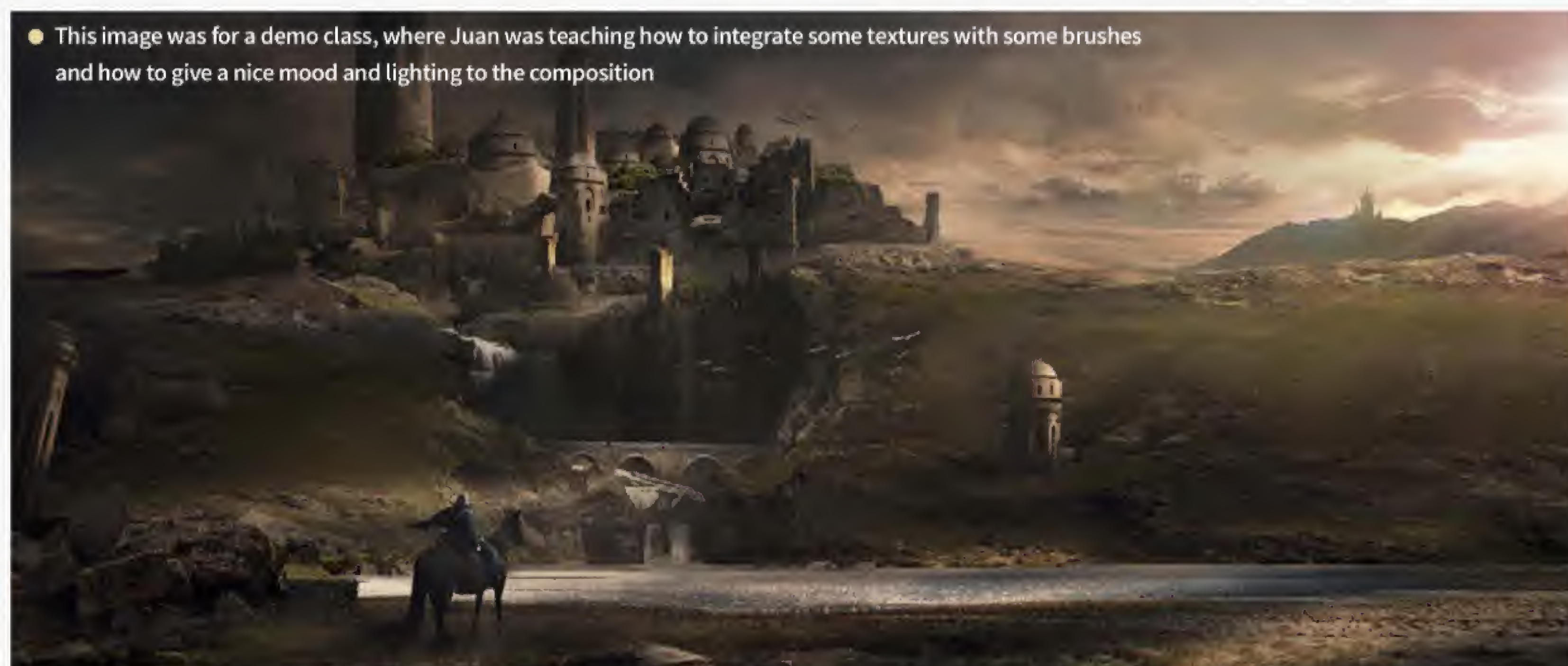
Although my job as a graphic designer was a great experience and I learned a lot from very talented people and made good friends, I always had this feeling that something more was expected of me. My passion for illustration led me to seek alternatives where I could apply my creativity.

In 2011 I began to focus on learning the methods of concept art and later that year I received my first job as concept artist for an independent game studio in Canada. At that time I decided to leave my work as a designer and embrace the opportunity I was waiting for! Simultaneously I started developing concepts for different local and international writers.

After six months into my first job as a concept artist, I learned new tools and techniques that began to attract the attention of other studios and writers, ►



● In this concept, Juan designed a couple of sci-fi characters to experiment with 3D shapes and textures to achieve a realistic and detailed render



● This image was for a demo class, where Juan was teaching how to integrate some textures with some brushes and how to give a nice mood and lighting to the composition





● In this concept, Juan designed a couple of sci-fi characters trying to experiment with random 3D shapes and textures to achieve a realistic and detailed render

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● In this illustration, Juan wanted to make an animal sanctuary; the challenge was to draw big stone bears







so I got my second freelance job for a graphic novel and simultaneously I started working for the Spanish writer Juan Gómez Juarado, author of several best sellers, with the plan to bring one of his most famous stories to film. This was my first job as a concept artist for a film project.

After these early experiences, many other projects with various studios and independent developers around the world came along. All this quickly brought me some awards and recognition in various top magazines and books in the industry. I have to say, *2dartist* magazine and *Digital Art Masters Vol.9*, have been publications that have given me great support and positive opportunities to my career.

In late 2013 I started working as a concept artist for producer Hostage Films in New York, in the visual development of a film project from Spanish director Ruben Latre. This year I was invited by the Department of Art and Design at the University of Science and Technology of Taiwan, and by the Filmhaus Camp in Singapore, to do some workshops and collaborate on the visual development of several educational and film projects.

**2da:** What was it about the digital tools that made you want to pursue a career in the industry?

**JPR:** The flexibility and versatility offered to me by various digital tools to express my ideas, and the ability to mix and experiment with different resources like textures, colors, shapes, photos, and so on, are the reasons why I started with digital art. Also, I have always dreamed of working in the film and videogame industries, and these are the digital tools that they are currently working with in the industry.

**2da:** Your sci-fi pieces are breathtaking! Where do you draw your inspiration from? What influences your work and motivates you?

**JPR:** Simple, I read and I go to the movies. One of the things I recommend is to read a lot and immerse yourself in the thousands of amazing stories that are out there – whatever the genre is, reading always brings tons of inspiration.

I also like going out and staying in touch with nature, which for me is the greatest source of inspiration. I also like to find quiet places where I can think of where I want to go for my next job.

Traveling and spending time with my girlfriend and my dogs is another way to relax and renew my ideas. I try not to spend much time at the computer too, I like to experiment with ink and other tools, and I'm a big fan of sketchbooks. ►



● This character was made to show Juan's vision of the police in a not-so-distant future

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Don't believe everything you see on the internet!

Don't get frustrated when you see work done in 30 minutes – this kind of agility requires time and hard work – you should instead worry about learning the basics and receive feedback from experts and enjoy the learning process.

If you don't have an art school nearby, you can find many alternatives on the internet from which to learn. You can also try books, magazines, and free and paid tutorials and online courses. The important thing is to understand that the basics are necessary for all. Don't try to start a building with the decoration, because without a strong structure and planning, we already have a good idea what will happen!





MAGIC PLACES FROM COLOMBIA - SOUTH AMERICA  
CONCEPT ART & ILLUSTRATION  
KOLDAN 2014



MAGIC PLACES FROM COLOMBIA - SOUTH AMERICA  
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● Juan decided to make this series of illustrations to share some of the magical places in Colombia, his home country

MAGIC PLACES FROM COLOMBIA - SOUTH AMERICA  
CONCEPT ART & ILLUSTRATION  
KOLDAN 2014





● Juan has always been impressed by the amazing Chinese culture, so he was really excited to draw a representation of a little piece of this beautiful country





ROLDAN





● Here, Juan wanted to depict a dystopian future with a giant robot giving back-up to a special forces team



**2da:** Could you choose one of your favorite past images (that you've created) and explain a little about its creation, and why it's your favorite?

**JPR:** To be honest, I don't have a favorite picture, because I'm still learning and trying to improve my skills. One of the images I've enjoyed creating the most though, was *Old Village*. This image was inspired by Chinese culture, its architecture, spirituality, amazing stories of myths and legends. It is a very inspiring and beautiful culture. I enjoyed this project a lot, because I could experiment with varieties of color, elements and shapes.

**2da:** Do you have any favorite software, techniques or processes that you apply to your artwork, that you would consider your signature style?

**JPR:** I really don't have a style, or look for one, I just try to experiment with different ways to make my images every time. Sometimes I like to start working with photographs, mixing some textures and looking for that type of reaction that may give a guide to my work, and other times I like to start from my sketchbook, planning each idea more carefully, then go to Photoshop and make some scratches and give them form.

Sometimes I like to use watercolors, markers and inks to create unexpected shapes and textures; then I like to try to simulate these similar tools with my tablet. I'll also sometimes use 3D software as the base to start my images.

What I seek is to learn different ways to provide solutions to the briefs that I receive from my clients, or find visual ways to develop my ideas – it's best to have more than one ace up your sleeve. So really I do not seek one particular way, I prefer to have many! I like the versatility!

**2da:** Do you ever practice CG/digital arts as a hobby and experiment with techniques and tools in your own personal artwork? If not, how else do you ►



● Another character to show Juan's vision of the police in a not-so-distant future **ROLOAN**

## 🕒 Artist Timeline Juan Pablo's career so far

**2011:** Juan decided to quit his job as a graphic designer in an advertising firm to follow his passion

**2011:** Juan got his first freelance job as a concept artist from NID Teravision based in Canada, making some designs for Space Empires Game

**2012:** This was Juan's first job on a movie production for the bestselling Spanish writer Juan Gomez Jurado

**2013:** Juan started work as a concept art instructor in a local school

**2013:** Juan's work was featured in 3dtotal's *Digital Art Masters Vol.9*

**2013:** Juan began work as a concept artist for *STORMEDGE: Rise of the Darkness* for JC Culture studio in Singapore

**2014:** Juan was invited to the Southern Taiwan University of Science and Technology to give an intensive course and collaborate on a film project

**2014:** Juan was invited to the Filmhaus Camp in Singapore to give a workshop and collaborate in a short film project

**2014:** Juan started work as a concept artist for the New York based Studio HOSTAGE FILMS to work in a film from the director Ruben Latre

**2014:** Juan started his own studio and art academy (Manta, Visual Studio) with another two artists in Colombia





● This illustration was inspired by the industrial revolution, represented in a distant future where the big train-ships surf giant underground cities





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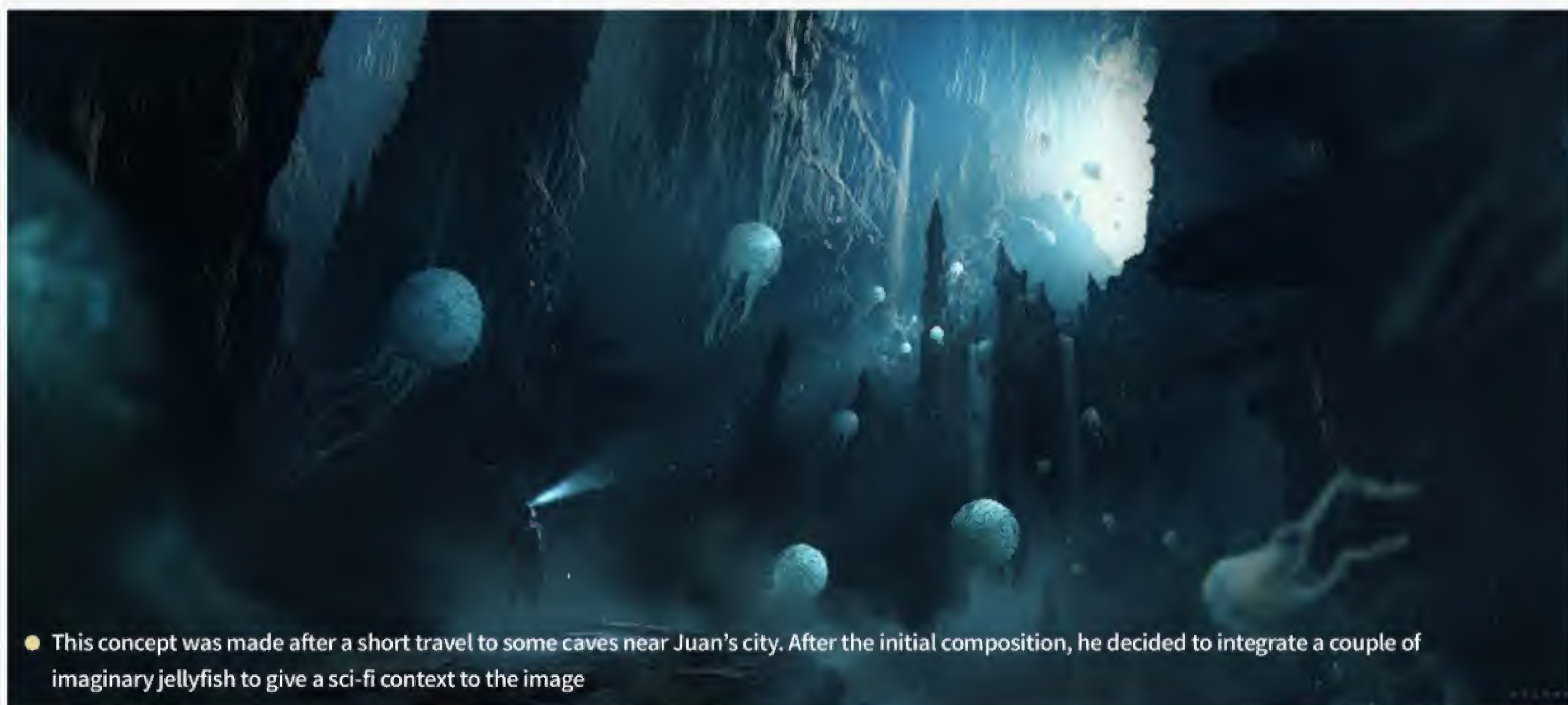


● In this artwork, Juan wanted to show two knights crossing a deep forest with a giant magic tree



● This concept was for a demo class where Juan showed his students how to integrate bushes, textures, shapes and nice colors into a simple composition





● This concept was made after a short travel to some caves near Juan's city. After the initial composition, he decided to integrate a couple of imaginary jellyfish to give a sci-fi context to the image

spend your free time away from the demands and deadlines of the creative industry?

**JPR:** As I said before I am always on the search for new methods that allow me to interpret my visions. I really like to experiment with photography, and I love music and teaching too. I am currently starting a small teaching academy of concept art in my city. So far, I've met interesting people and spending time with my students is something I really enjoy doing – just sharing ideas, talking about the latest films, discussing the last book we read, talking about videogames, a little history and sometimes trying to create some new stories and drawing them.

**2da:** What has been your favorite project to work on/ greatest artistic achievement?

**JPR:** For me, each project has been a great achievement – it has been a difficult path because in South America there is no concept art school (at least that I know of), so it has all been self-study. My job fills me with happiness and channels a passion that I want to take as far as I can.

One of the jobs that best fills me with gratification is working as a concept artist for director Ruben Latre. Ruben is a great person from whom I learned a lot. I love his style of work and working as a concept artist for films is one of the dreams I've pursued since the beginning. Hostage Films has opened its doors for me and now I just hope to do my best and to participate in other productions.

**2da:** What would be your perfect project to work on?

**JPR:** I dream of working on AAA productions. I think that every new concept artist wants to work in a production for Marvel or DC comics, or studios like Weta, Naughty Dog or Ubisoft. Many of my favorite

## ⚡ PRO TIPS

### Be self-critical

One of the things that I advise is to not settle. When you stop to analyze an image, make sure that the bases are well applied, the idea is well represented, the composition is strong and really shows the best of you in that job. When you are sure that your work is well done, share it with experts and correct what is not right, then you should have a piece for your portfolio.

### Discipline

Something very important, if you want to achieve a position in the industry, you need to understand that you must be constant, you have to learn and generate competitive images, you have to practice a lot, and try to draw every day to improve your skills. Many people ask me what the secret is to the images that I do. There really is no a secret – it's commitment and passion for what I do.

Stay active in both the digital and traditional practices. Be objective and set short-term goals, like: 'For the next three months, I will practice anatomy, every day, as many hours as possible, then begin to vary the environment, then color, lighting, and so on'. In time you really will have greater ability to interpret your ideas and you will start to generate more interesting compositions.

The other thing is to read a lot, and then try to interpret key scenes of the story. This exercise serves as training for your brain when you are developing a brief, and over time you can really conquer the highest challenges and achieve your goals!

Finally, something important – believe in what you do. Visualize your goals and enjoy the path that lies ahead. No matter what they tell you, if it's something you want to do, do it, without hurrying and with common sense!

artists and heroes have worked on these, and when I see their work it motivates me to keep learning and give my best to achieve it.

My ideal project would be to create my own IP and then see it on the big screen or on a AAA game. That's one of the goals that I have long term, and now I'm writing my first project, I hope to be able to share it with you later.

**2da:** Are there any other areas in the digital art world that you'd like to branch into (and why)?

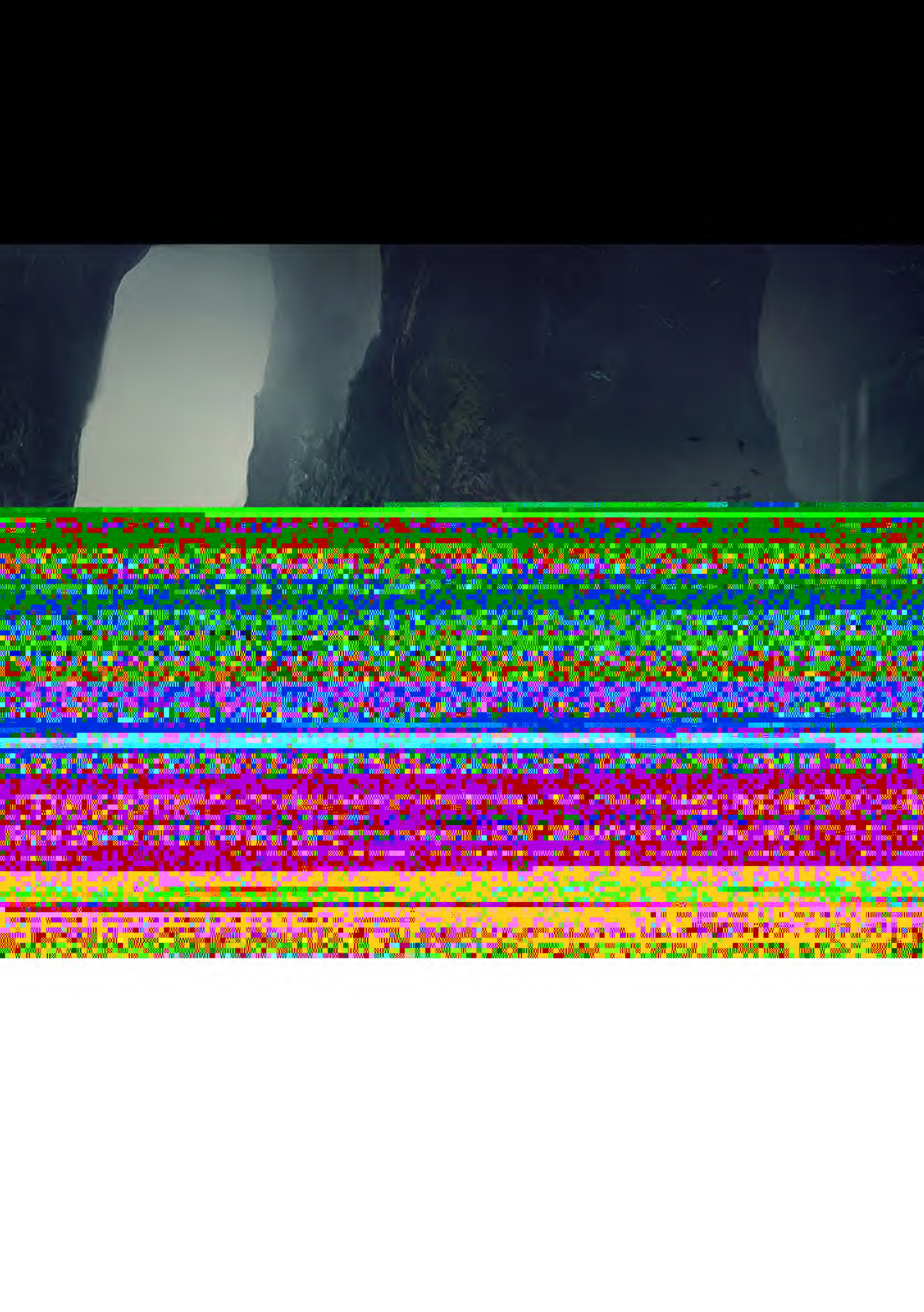
**JPR:** One of the things I like to do is have my own digital graphic novel – for this there is much work ahead to do something shocking and with the best possible quality. ►





● This concept was inspired by the amazing TV show, *Vikings*!









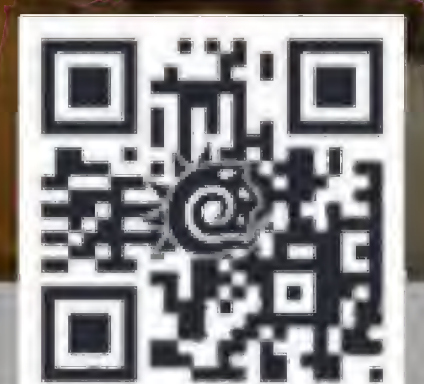








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Italian digital artist Lorenzo Zitta knows how to create thought provoking still images with LightWave 11.6. Whether the still is computer-generated with LightWave, an artful arrangement of digital photos, or a combination of the two, the composition of the scene - with its attention to detail and unusual merging of objects - demands a closer look.

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# Atomhawk's spacecraft concept art

Art studio, Atomhawk Design, has released the first images from their work on Marvel's latest blockbuster, *Guardians of the Galaxy*. Check out this mouth-watering gallery of stunning spaceship concept images, form-study illustrations and key-frame art [▶](#)



## The Artist



**Ron Ashtiani**

atomhawk.com

**Job Title:**

Director, Atomhawk Design

Atomhawk is a world leading design studio, offering bespoke digital art solutions for the games, film and digital media industries. The company strives to provide outstanding concept art, intuitive user interfaces, inspired animation, stunning marketing art and innovative interactive experiences.





**“Guardians has been an awesome and truly inspiring project to work on. As our second Marvel project, Guardians presented a fresh set of challenges”**

A great aspect (one of many!) of the gigantic outer-space vision, *Guardians of the Galaxy*, was the extraordinary attention to detail and design. Past the opening scenes of the film, *Guardians of the Galaxy* is set exclusively in otherworldly places. The idea of rendering these many worlds, settings, creatures, and vehicles must be altogether daunting, yet thrilling. As a result of this otherworldliness, teams of artists worked excitedly to bring these places and sets to life, and because of that, we’ve seen a wealth of incredible concept art emerge.

“This time we were tasked with reimagining a Marvel comic from scratch, rather than working with an existing film franchise. The team relished the creative license this gave us and I think this feeling is evident in the work we produced.” ►



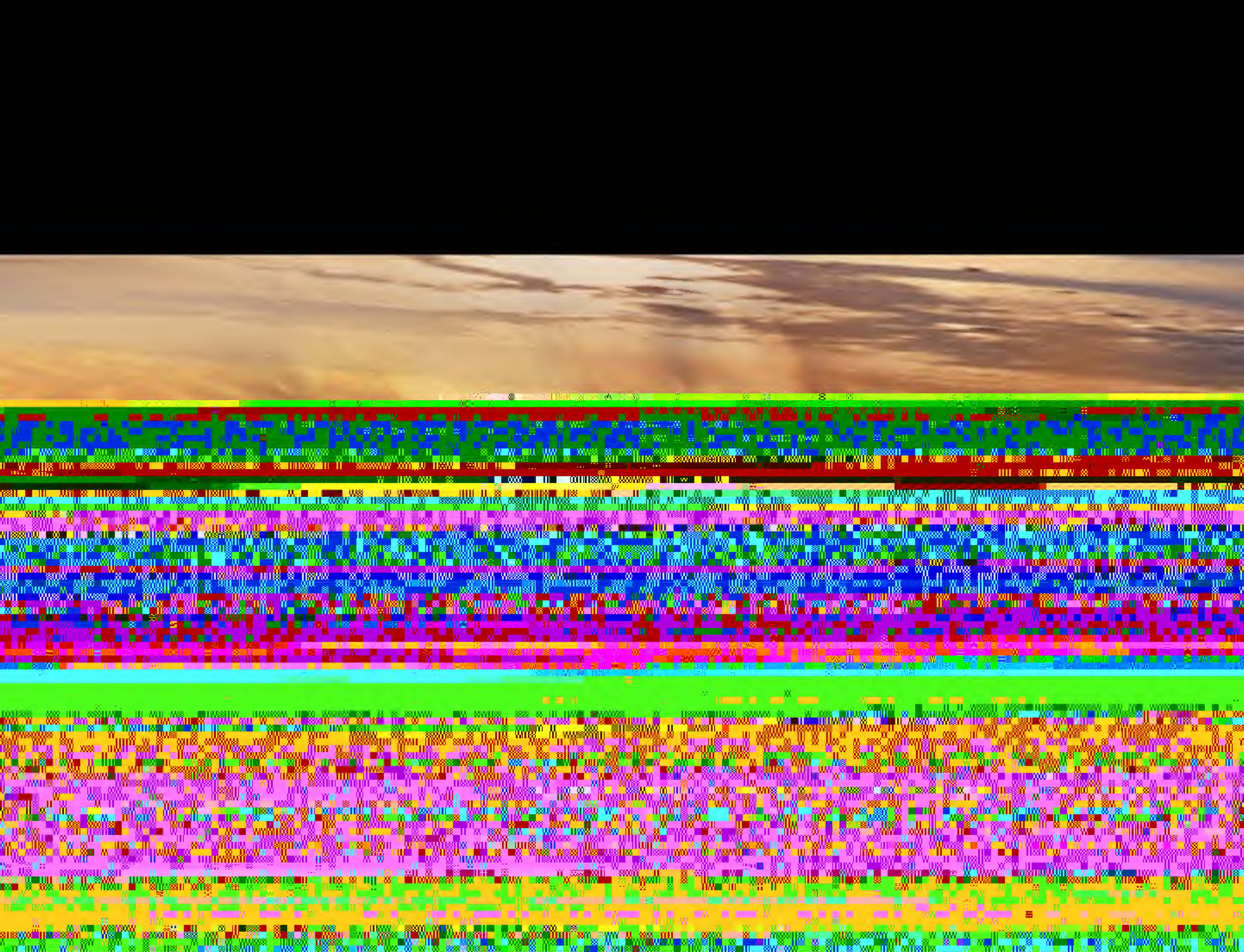




▲  
Above: © Atomhawk Design  
Artist: Pete Thompson

◀  
Left: © Atomhawk Design  
Artist: Tim Hill













Atomhawk Design focused primarily on the ships and crafts you see in the movie, showcasing their soaring ideas for the Milano, Dark Aster, Kree Necrocraft, Yondu's fighter and such notable *Guardians* destinations as the Klyn, Knowhere and the Collector's Room.

Four members of the Atomhawk team were involved in the project, spending over a year working closely with the Marvel team on the action-packed space adventure to create some of the finished film's signature visuals, especially seen in the Milano, Klyn Prison and the crazy, celestial-head space station, Knowhere.

Atomhawk are delighted to see how those concepts have come to life in such a successful

film – *Guardians of the Galaxy* has now grossed \$612m worldwide.

**“The highlights of working on the film were the creation of the Milano spacecraft, which demanded a huge amount of detail and complexity, the Klyn Prison and the severed head of a giant floating celestial being, known as Knowhere”**

– Atomhawk Director and Founder, Ron Ashtiani

We look forward to seeing Atomhawk's work on a third Marvel movie soon! ●

**Atomhawk's recent projects include:** *Thor: The Dark World* (Marvel), *Injustice: Gods Among Us* (WB Games), *Killzone: Mercenary* (Sony), *Mortal Kombat* (WB Games), *Ryse: Son of Rome* (Microsoft), *Wonderbook: Book of Spells* (Sony), *Pottermore*

**Awards include:** The Independent Games Developer Association (TIGA) Awards: Best Art Supplier 2013; North East Business Awards: Best Creative Company 2013; North East Chamber of Commerce Awards: Excellence in Innovation 2013; nominated for 2014 Develop Awards, Creative Contribution: Visuals for work on Project Spark for Microsoft ([www.projectspark.com](http://www.projectspark.com))





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# Sketch WORKSHOP



An innovative and fun way for people of all ages to find the inspiration to pick up a pencil – and draw!

The Sketch Workshop incorporates a luxury leather-style folder that can securely hold a workbook and up to 20 quality drawing tools. We've created a number of workbooks that cover popular topics including:

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**CHARACTERS**

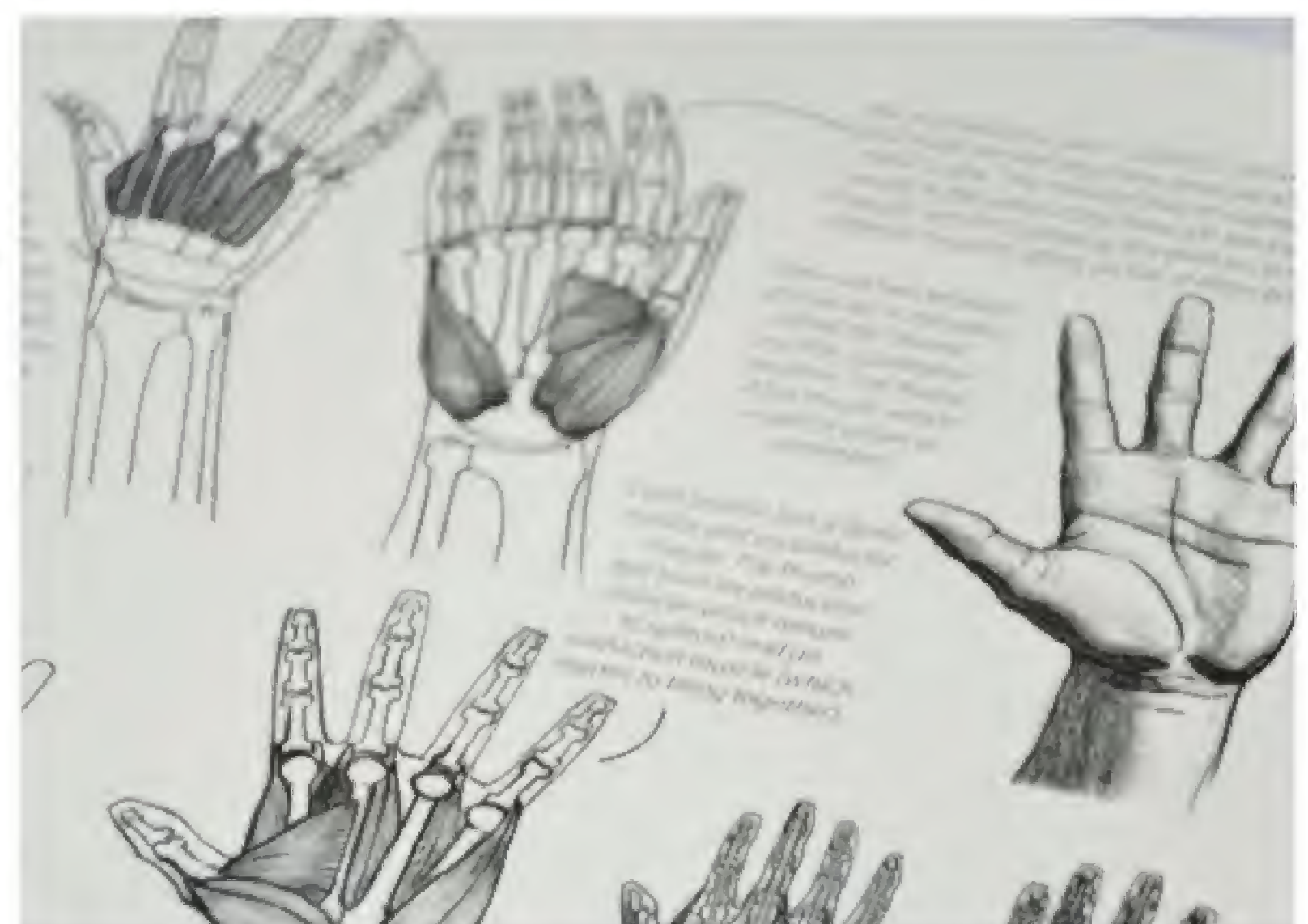
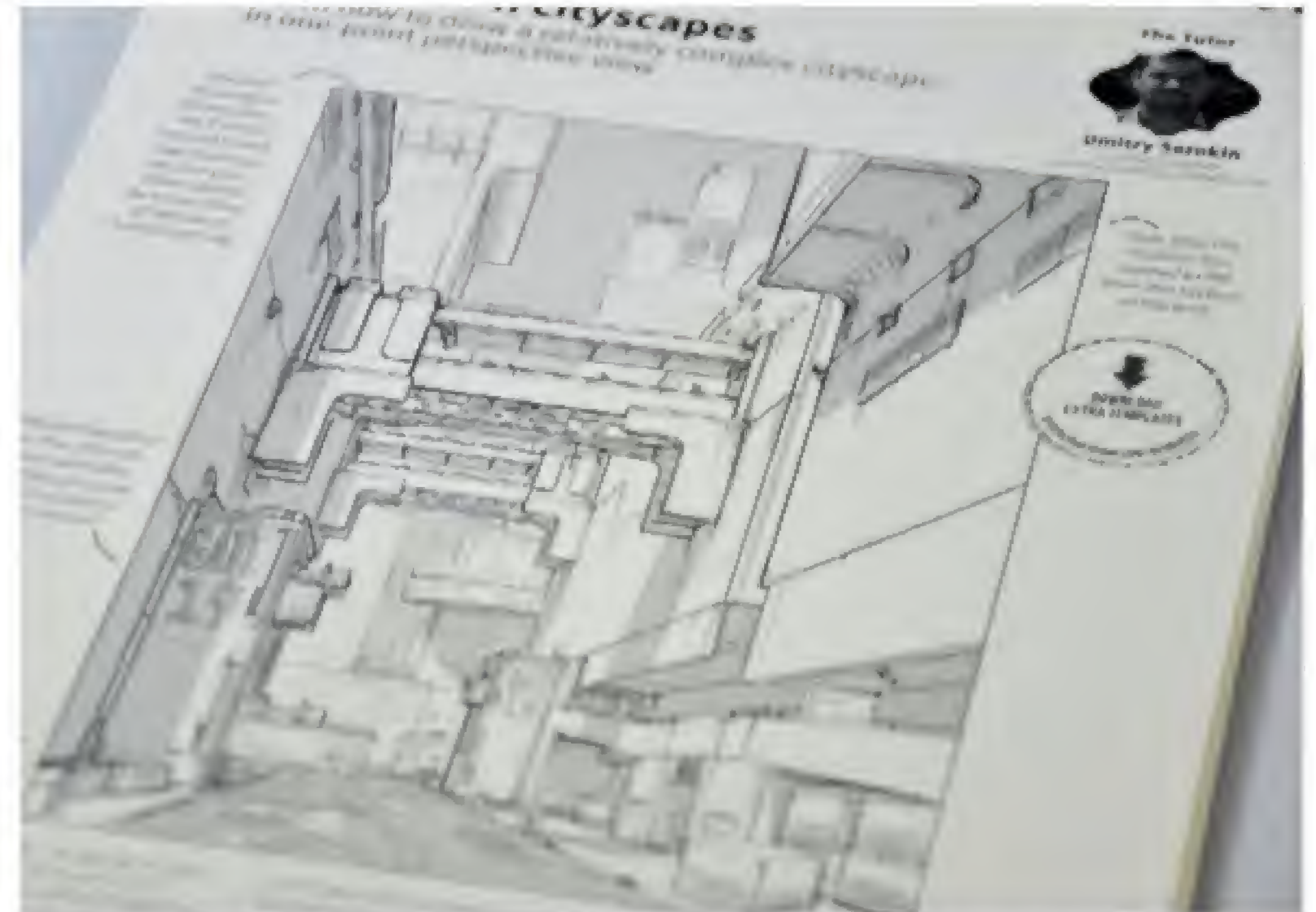
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BRUN CROES

Sketchbook

Illustrator and Concept Artist, Brun Croes opens the pages of his sketchbook to reveal the starting point of his cool character ideas.

## The Artist



**Brun Croes**  
bruncroes.com

Brun Croes is a Freelance Illustrator and Concept Artist, whose specialties include character design, sci-fi, fantasy, environmental design, and visual development.



### Take a look inside Brun Croes' sketchbook of charming cartoony characters...

Sketching is one of my most beloved things about being an illustrator and concept artist. But being an illustrator is all about working for clients, which is fun but can also be quite limiting sometimes – which is where my sketchbooks come in!

A sketchbook is the perfect place to do what I want and to draw without any constraints, without someone looking over my shoulder, telling me to change this and that. It's the perfect laboratory in which to come up with new ideas, explore my style and develop my own skills.

Sketching is where it all begins for me. Before doing any illustration, traditionally or digitally, I retreat to my sketchbook. It's the magic place where I can focus on enhancing my craft without the fear of failure. The more I sketch, whether from my imagination or real life, the better I become at my craft – it is a crucial and fundamental part of creating anything visual.

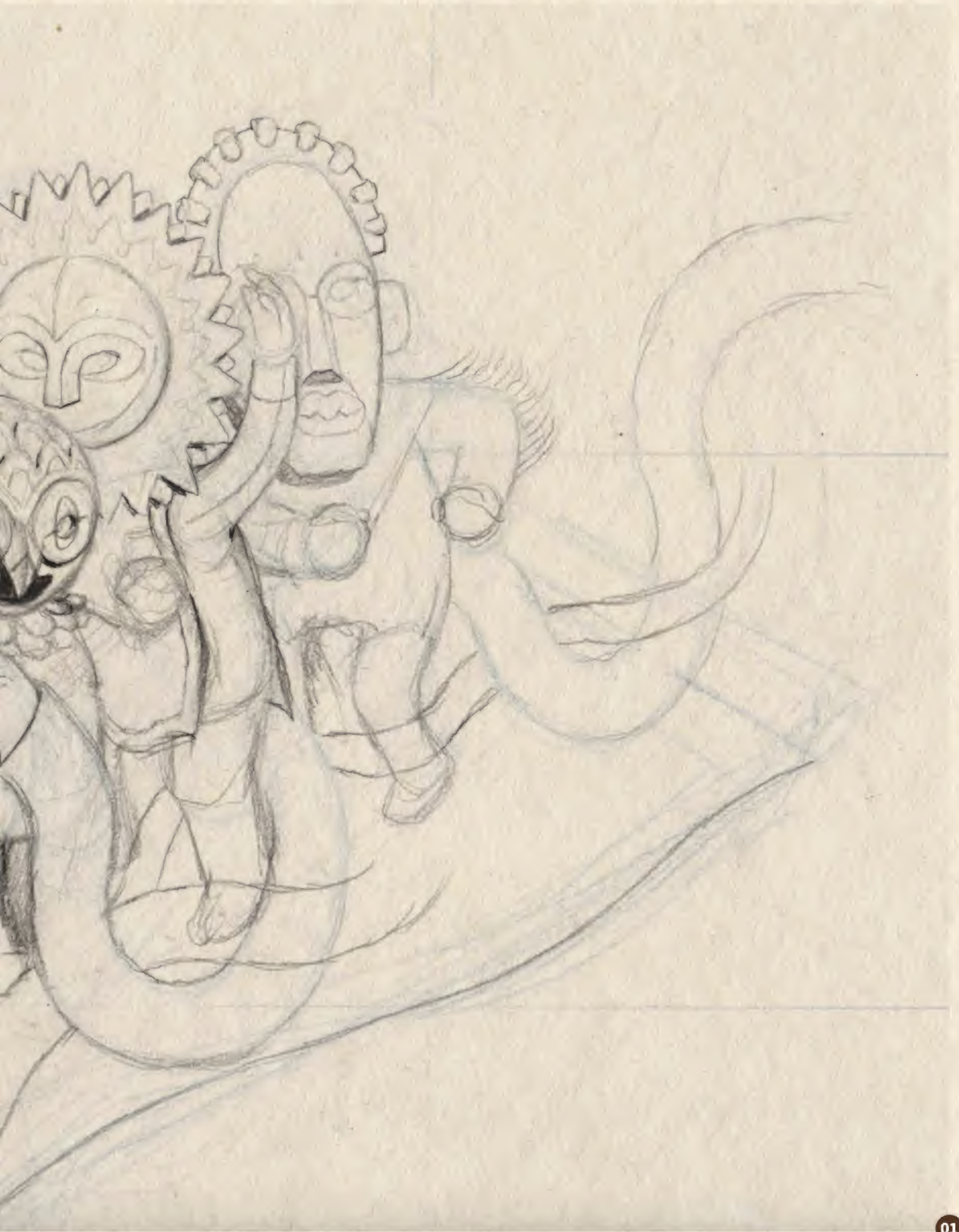
I encourage everyone reading this to doodle every day. Don't be afraid of failure while sketching: if you're not making the progress you're looking for then try to fail better. Failure is the greatest learning tool for self-improvement. When I sketch in my sketchbook, not every page is filled with good drawings – most of them aren't. But these sketches exist purely as a way of experimentation and exercise.

Sketching, for me, is pure magic. It's where my passion for drawing began and where I discovered that I could put down the images that I saw in my head. Best of all, it is my personal hiding place. I look at my sketchbook as another world; a place where I can go to do what I want and no one can take that away from me. ●

- 
- 01** Some very simple line work that ended up being used in one of my illustrations. I love to start with a simple sketch and paint on top of it, be it digital or traditional











02

**02** I tried to focus a bit more on learning how to draw movement and the folds on clothes with this one

**03** I normally draw very Scandinavian-inspired illustrations; this was an effort to step away from my comfort zone













06



07

**04** These are a bunch of doodles; they are very loose sketches I did as a warm-up exercise. They are about having fun and coming up with new ideas without worrying about whether or not they look good

**05** This was a sketch I did for a story I was working on; it was the catalyst for a lot of my traditional sketches and inspired me to do a lot more. Before this sketch I was mainly doing digital work, but a friend encouraged me to return to traditional sketching when the digital was not working out. I'm very glad I did this one

**06** I drew this at a convention, without really having an idea in my head; it is a result of letting my hands and pencil take over my brain

**07** I love drawing plants, and I love to give them a sense of design





08

**08** This was an idea I had for a visual table of contents

**09** One of my favorite sketches, although sadly I've lost the original. I had tons of fun experimenting with the hair and smoke





For more inspiring concept designs and sketches from some of the world's most talented artists, be sure to check out *Sketching from the Imagination: An Insight into Creative Drawing*.

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# 2dartist

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and their artwork to adorn the pages of our  
magazine. If you think you have what it takes,  
get in touch!

To submit, simply email Jess at  
**[jess@3dtotal.com](mailto:jess@3dtotal.com)** with a selection of your  
images or a link to your portfolio online, plus a  
little information about you.

We look forward to hearing from you!



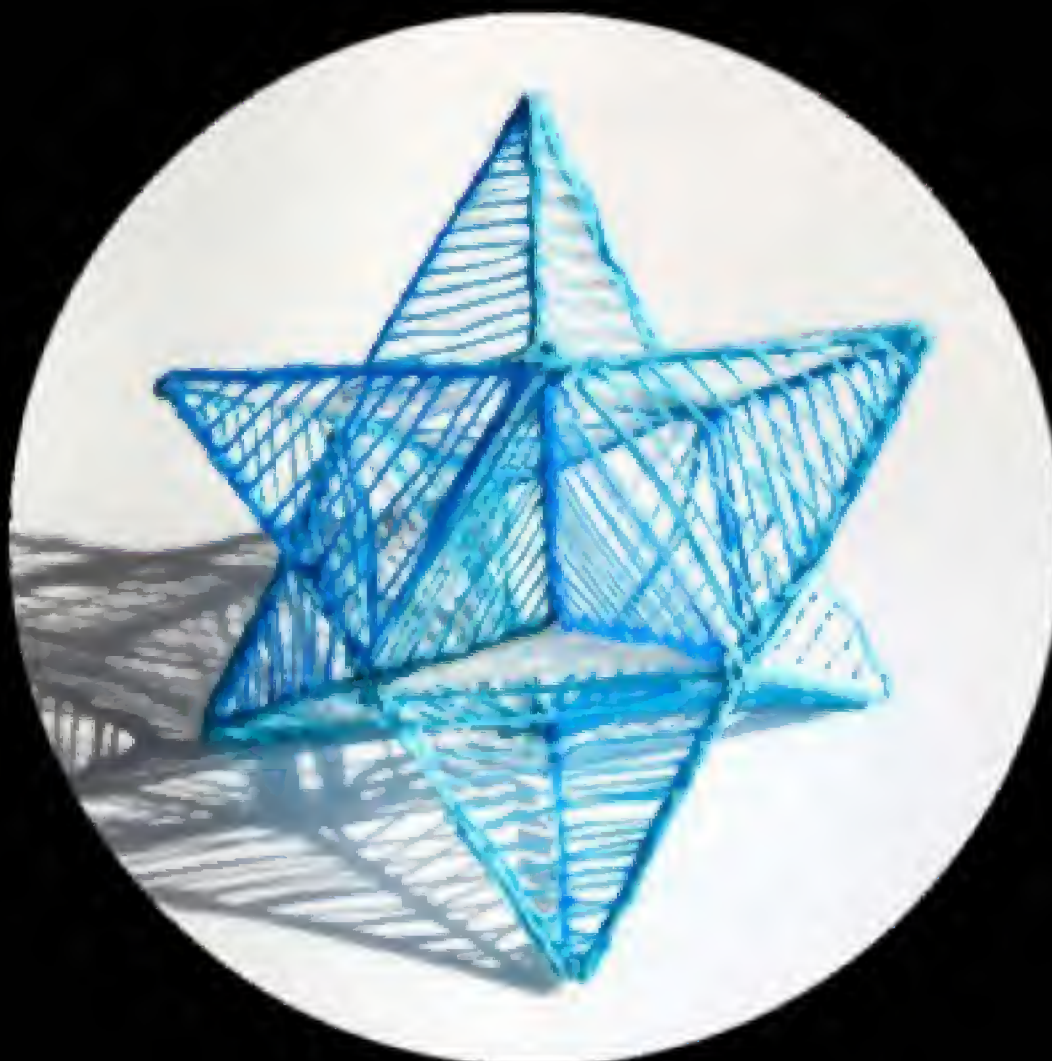
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# Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!





Submit your images! Simply email [jess@3dtotal.com](mailto:jess@3dtotal.com)



**Desert , Lucky Strike**

Pozdnyakov Ivan

Year created: 2014

Software used: Photoshop

Web: [a-p-e-o-n-e.blogspot.ru](http://a-p-e-o-n-e.blogspot.ru)





### Bionic Girl

Max Schulz

Year created: 2014

Web: [xocol.com](http://xocol.com)





## Violet

Sabrina Miramon

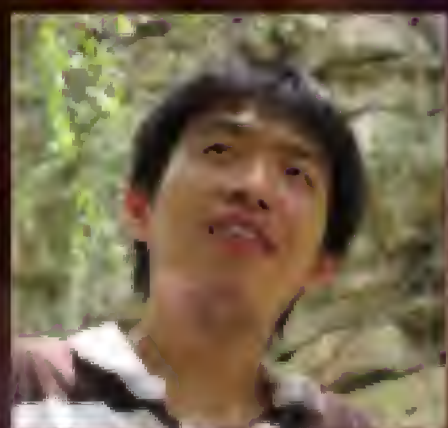
Year created: 2014

Web: [mioum.com](http://mioum.com)



Sab.





**S/MK 7.61**

Zezhou Chen

Year created: 2014

Web: [zezhouchen.com](http://zezhouchen.com)









**The Forbidden Fruit**

Tim Löchner

Year created: 2014

Web: [timloechner.blogspot.de](http://timloechner.blogspot.de)

© Tim Löchner





## Imperial Immortal

Stepan Alekseev

Year created: 2014

Web: [artstation.com/artist/chosac](http://artstation.com/artist/chosac)







### Tomcat series

Piotr Jablonski (nicponim)

Year created: 2014

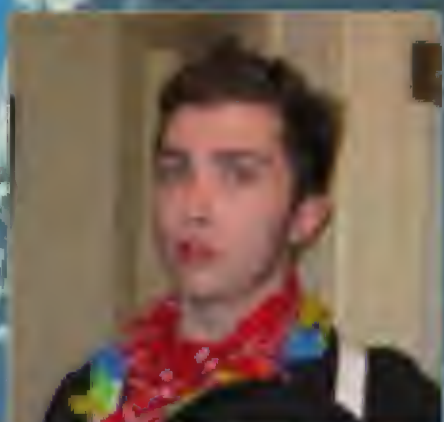
Web: [facebook.com/nicponimsky](https://facebook.com/nicponimsky)











## Knife River

Ryan Gitter

Year created: 2014

Web: [gitterart.com](http://gitterart.com)







**Ciperass**

bluezima

Year created: 2013

Web: [bluezima.com](http://bluezima.com)

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**Deity**

Sebastian Kowoll

Year created: 2014

Web: [skalienart.com](http://skalienart.com)

© Sebastian Kowoll







## The Artist



**Justin Gerard**  
gallerygerard.com

**Materials Used:**  
Traditional tools

From the moment that Justin Gerard first learned that the crayons were meant for coloring and not for eating, he has been drawing. While Justin has always derived a great deal of inspiration from nature and human history, his favorite source of inspiration is story. The works of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis have remained constant sources of inspiration for him throughout his career.



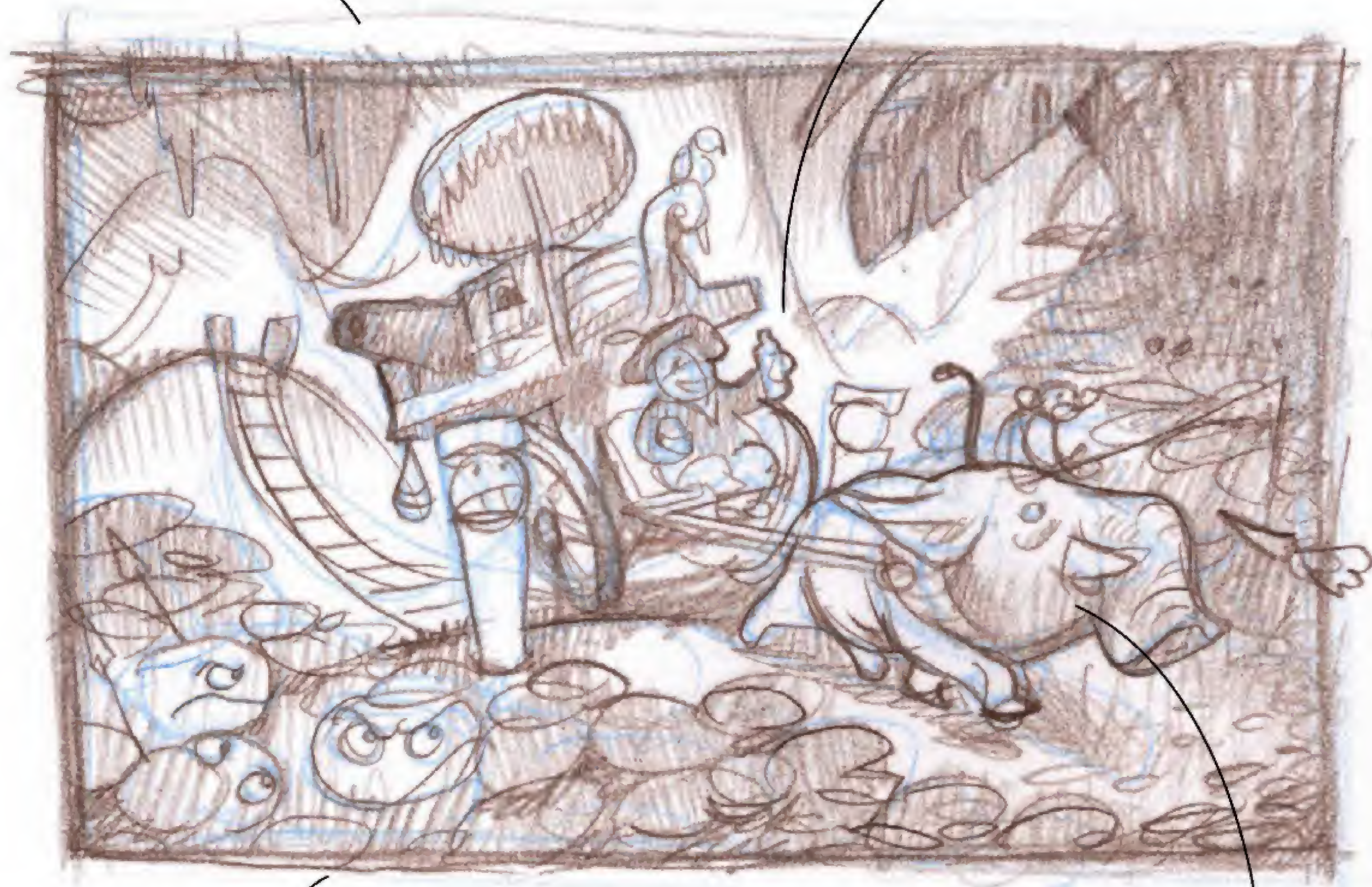
# Sketch a fantasy character

Learn how to compose a complex fantasy scene from your imagination, starting with the design of your character. Justin Gerard shares useful techniques and top tips to sketch out a fantasy character ready to place into a scene [▶](#)



Here we see the basic shapes of the scene

With my thumbnail I can work out where my characters are in relation to one another so that the image flows better



I draw my thumbnails very small, usually between 1 inch and 3 inches wide, this helps me keep the overall composition together in my mind

Even though I am drawing small, and am not worried over details, I do try to work out the general pose for each character

## Discover the steps and techniques to design and sketch a fantasy character...

Drawing a complex scene with multiple figures and background elements can seem daunting at first, even when you are very experienced. In this series I will show you how to break your composition down into manageable chunks so that they can be tackled one at a time.

I will begin with the thumbnail stages and show how I work on rough drawings, collect and utilize references, and finally take those rough sketches and turn them into finished drawings that are ready to be placed into our expectant scene.

### Tools

Basic Drawing Paper, Strathmore 300 series Tracing Paper, General's Kimberly 2H, HB, 2B Pencils, kneaded eraser, digital camera.

**01 The thumbnail:** Before I begin my scene, I need to have a fixed idea of what will be in it and where everything will be placed. To do this, I draw several tiny sketches

(or thumbnails) of my scene as I see it in my imagination. This thumbnail will be my guide for

the rest of the project and I will revisit it again and again as I work through my scene. ►

## PRO TIP

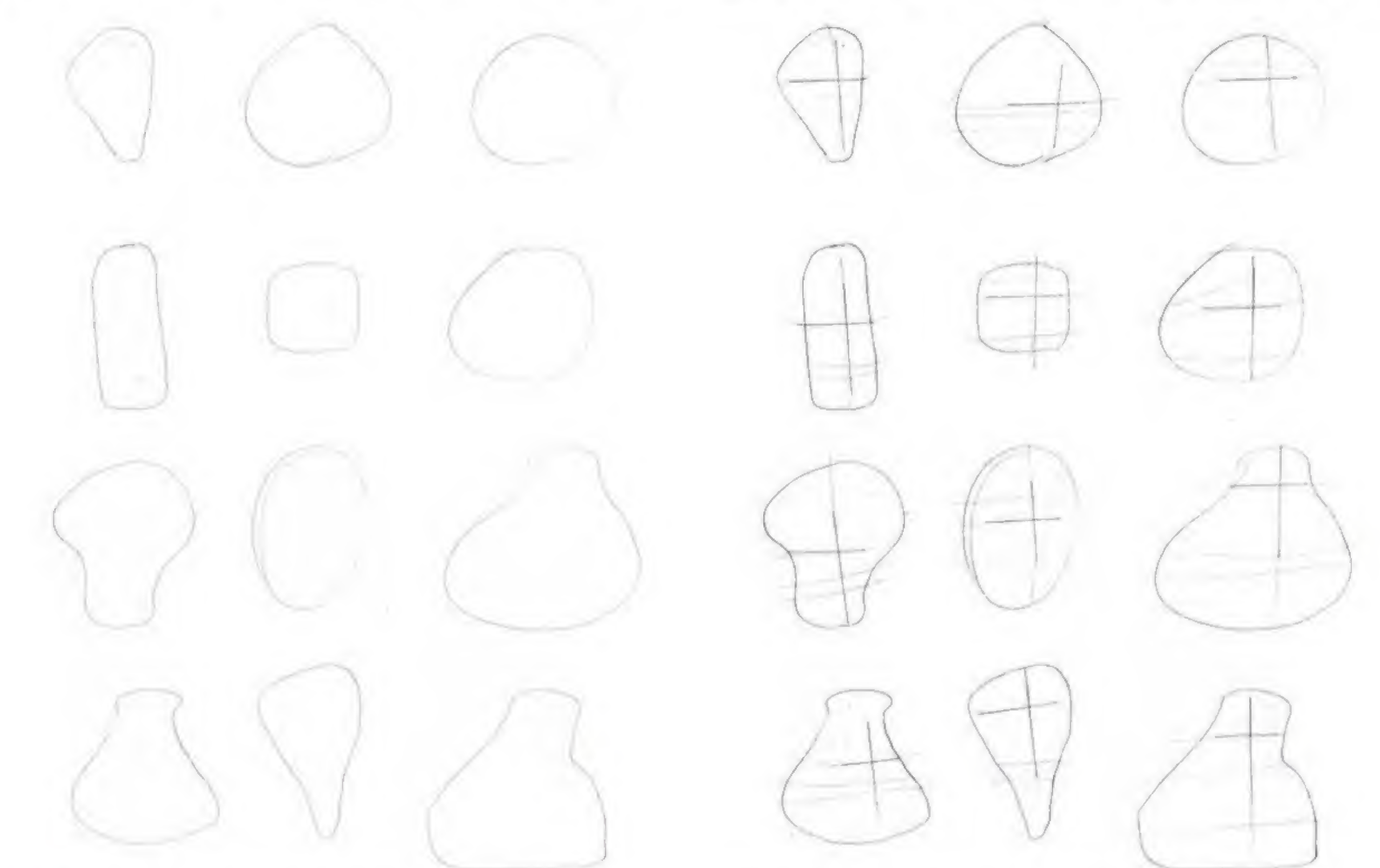
### Thumbnailing

In the thumbnail stage I am not worried about my drawing being very detailed (or even very good). I am treating my scene like a stage here, and I am constantly moving my characters and set pieces around in it until I am happy with it. Things will be messy and unrefined and that is okay, we will have plenty of time later to add details and polish to the image.





● Taking some quick thumbnails to get the expression for the character



● Drawing different shapes can reveal new character ideas. Place a cross in the middle to mark where the features will lie

**02 Photo-reference gathering:** Now that I know what my main character's pose will be, I can shoot some quick reference of my material to get the expression right.

We need to be focusing on our character, and specifically, on his expression. The expression is the lynchpin of the whole scene. If we get it wrong, the whole scene will not make sense. So I take a number of very quick photos, using my thumbnail as a guide.

**03 Faces:** When trying to work out just who your character is, sometimes it can be a helpful exercise to experiment by drawing

different expressions to help you learn more about them.

Experiment with different face shapes! Is your character a weasely thief? A noble captain? An overfed banker? Is their face shaped more like a pear or a plum? More like an owl or a fox? Be imaginative and don't be afraid to try out crazy things. This is the preliminary phase so now is the best time to try out any of these wild ideas. For an exercise: using a very light pencil, fill out a page with a variety of different head shapes. Once you have them filled them out, place a line grid for each face. Don't be afraid to move the eyes up or down dramatically. You may be surprised to

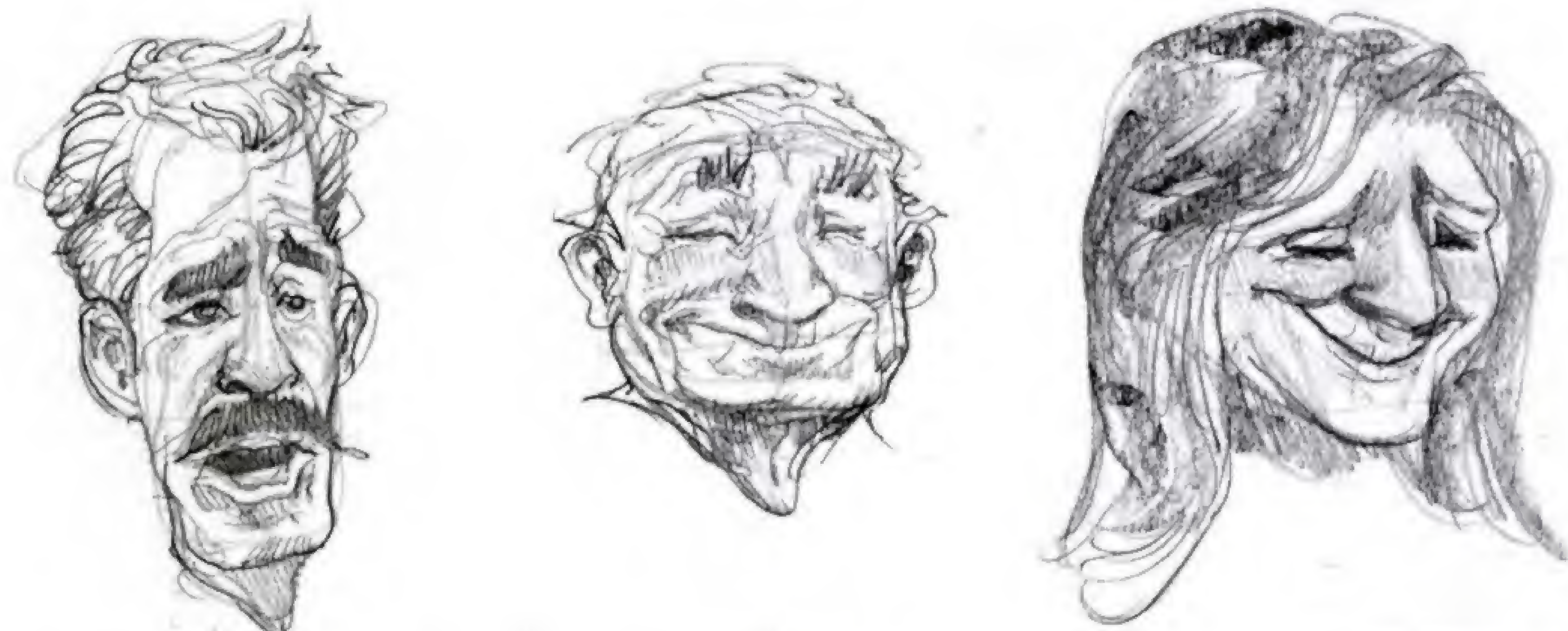
learn how a small shift in where the eyes are can change a face drastically.

Now with a darker pencil draw in the faces, either from imagination or by taking inspiration from real life.

As you work through this exercise, stay on the lookout for faces and expressions that might fit your own character.

Once you know the shape of the face, you may need to do further work to decide on the features and expression. So now we will focus on the face, feature by feature. ►





● Explore different characters



**04 Eyes:** While eyes may not always be as helpful as people claim, I think eyebrows are particularly interesting and can communicate a great deal about a character.

Pay careful attention to the shape of the eye. And make sure that the eyes line up correctly on the face. NOTHING will ruin a face faster than having one eye sliding off unevenly on the face. In order to make this easier, it is helpful to begin drawing your subject's face using a grid with a center "+" sign to help keep the proportions correct.

**05 Mouths:** They say that the eyes are the windows to the soul. Personally, I think that this is untrue and that mouths are usually the truer representation.

Notice how small changes in the muscles around the mouth can make such large differences in your character's expression.

For practice drawing the mouth, grab a mirror and make some expressions in it. Keep the expression while you are drawing. This trick has been used by artists for centuries to inject vast amounts of personality into their characters. Experiment until you find the right expression for your character.

**06 The hat:** The costume your character is wearing is very important because it gives us very helpful clues as to who they are, what they do, and where they have been, all of which contribute to the narrative quality of your final picture.

So now I have collected my references, I can begin the rough exploratory sketches of my character.

**07 Rough drawing practice:** So how do you draw these rough sketches of your character? Using the classical academic approach to drawing, you can draw from your imagination, from your photo-reference, or as I have done here, from a little of both.

First, I draw out the rough shape of the character very lightly using a 2H pencil. Then, while still using the lighter 2H pencil, I rough in the basic outline of the character, making sure to pay close attention to the overall shape. It's okay to be a little messy here as you explore, just as long as you draw lightly.

Now with a darker HB pencil, I re-draw the correct lines from the previous step and leave out the ones that are not correct. Here I will look at my references more closely to see where I might have gone wrong or if there are any interesting details that I have missed. I also erase areas to get the ►



- The shapes of the eyebrows can dramatically change the look of your character

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Eraser highlights

The eraser is not just for corrections! Don't be afraid to use it to pull out highlights and re-enforce the outlines of your shapes.







● Exploring emotions through different mouths



● The stages of working through a character sketch





● The stages of working through a character sketch

**“Having some real-world material that matches the material in your illustration always helps, even if it’s the wrong shape and design. The main issue is that you want to have some reference for how an object’s surface will take light and shadow in your scene”**

shapes and outlines right, without worrying too much about the details yet. When I finish, I have a tighter line drawing of the character.

Now with my darkest 2B pencil, I draw in the shadows and render my character and all the details. This is my favorite stage because this is where we finally begin to see our character come to life and get to know them a little better. Where do they live? Where are they going? Just what have they been up to?

Because I spent so much effort getting the outline and drawing right, now I can have fun working on details and nuances of light and shadow without having to worry about my character’s proportions falling apart.

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Tool Tip: Edging

Along with drawing with the tip of your pencil, you can also flip it on its side and use the edge! This can be extremely helpful in getting interesting and murky shadows, as well as achieving a variety of line widths.

This is the basic academic approach to drawing. It has been used by representational artists for centuries to achieve accurate and life-like drawings. It has worked for countless artists in the past and it will work for you too.





● Using props to set up a photographic reference for the details



**08 Final photo reference:** For this tutorial I am using unprofessional models, a volunteer photographer and found materials I procured locally. (Translation: I grabbed an old jacket and asked my wife to take a quick photo of me making faces at the camera). Though I sometimes actually do pay professionals to model, I will more often than not shoot reference using friends and family as stand-ins for my characters. Now that I know more what I am after in my character, it is easier to me to get the pose and expressions right.

My disreputable character is pictured in this scene as being in possession of the Sacred Frog-King Relic. I couldn't manage to find a sacred frog relic in my studio, but I did manage to find this goose to act as a stand-in. Having some real-world material that matches the material in your

illustration always helps, even if it's the wrong shape and design. The main issue is that you want to have some reference for how an object's surface will take light and shadow in your scene.

**09 The costume:** Remember that your character's outfit tells its own story within the story of the picture. So make sure to spend some time considering what they should

be wearing to make their story more interesting. Is he a lowly ship's hand that went A.W.O.L. to pursue riches and adventure in the jungle? Or perhaps a beset upon good man, who was marooned by his pirate colleagues for not going along with their schemes? Perhaps he was a captain who owes some very powerful people a great deal of money? ►

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Change the angle

Feeling stuck? Try re-drawing your scene from a different angle or from the perspective of one of the character's within the scene. This exercise can help get your creativity moving when nothing seems to work.





● Explore costume shapes

In all these cases, the outfit can assist you in telling your character's story.

**10 Refining the sketch:** Now that I have done my rough sketches and have arrived at one that I am pleased with and which seems to fit my character, I am ready to move on to my final drawing. Here's a secret: I am actually quite lousy at drawing. But here is another secret, most of the best artists are. In order to overcome this, they use the time-honored trick of revise-revise-revise to achieve greatness in their work.

In this example you can see my initial drawing (on the left) that I drew freehand using a 2H pencil on drawing paper. I used my thumbnail as a guide. This drawing is fun, and carries the overall energy I am after, but it lacks the necessary polish to truly communicate my ideas.

Now, using a darker pencil, I revise this initial drawing using the same academic approach that I used in the previous exercise. As you can see, by using it we have arrived at a much nicer drawing. But we are not finished! Upon closer inspection we see that even though we have redrawn our image, our proportions are incorrect and our character appears misshapen.

We could try to erase it and redraw the broken parts, but I actually really like them; they are just in the wrong places, or are the wrong sizes – as you can see in the absurdly oversized hand holding the bottle.

To fix this, artists both classical and contemporary use tracing paper. First, place a few loose sheets of tracing paper over your drawing until you can



● Start with simple shapes, and build on top on them with a darker pencil

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Mirroring with tracing paper

An added benefit of tracing paper is that you can flip it over to see how your drawing looks from the reverse angle. This can help reveal errors in proportion. As you work, take advantage of this in order to arrive at a more successful drawing.

Caution! Thinner tracing paper is very delicate and doesn't stand up well to smudging or erasing, so try to keep your lines clean, precise and accurate to avoid damaging the drawing.



● Tracing paper comes in handy when working with proportion



just make out the details. Then, using a sharp pencil (I use a highly sharpened HB here) redraw your character. As you come across areas where the shape is incorrect, don't be afraid to move

the tracing paper around so that the misplaced element (such as the hand or eye was in my drawing) is in the right place before you commit your lines to the tracing paper. Lastly, if you draw

something and don't like it, don't be afraid to redraw that area using a different sheet of tracing paper. You can easily cut out and re-assemble the various sheets of tracing paper later on. ●



## The Artist



**Justin Gerard**  
gallerygerard.com



# 2dartist

Issue 106 | October 2014

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106

**42**  
pages of  
top 2D  
tuition!

## Sketch a fantasy character

Design and sketch a character  
from your imagination...  
Justin Gerard shows you how

## Paint powerful pinups

Kari Günther shares her creative  
workflow for digitally painting  
strong pinup figures in Photoshop

## CREATE CREATURE CUSTOM BRUSHES

Rabie Rahou demonstrates  
top techniques for speeding  
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## The Artist



**Kari Günther**

karipaints.com

**Software Used:**

Photoshop

Kari Günther is an illustrator specializing in portrait and fantasy illustration. Using color and body language, Kari strives to unveil the human condition and complex abstract thought through visual media.



# Paint powerful pin-ups

Kari Günther demonstrates how to design and paint a dynamic pin-up girl in this step-by-step tutorial. From sketching out your line-art, to picking your color scheme and painting in your mid-tones and highlights; Kari shows you how! ▶



## Learn the best practices for transforming your line-art into a pin-up illustration...

In this tutorial, I will show you the illustration and digital painting process to create a pin-up figure that represents a tank/army theme using Photoshop. It will cover the steps required to paint a finished illustration in a polished style (in contrast to a painterly or experimental style) all the way from concept to completion. Tools used in this tutorial were: Wacom Cintiq 24HD and Photoshop.

In addition to how I do each step, I also aim to show you why. One of the greatest challenges of an illustration is not to paint a pretty picture, but to convey an idea as well, even when the image focuses on a figure for the sake of the figure. Combined with both focuses, I believe this is a great method for producing a successful illustration.

**01 Idea generation:** Once I've received the brief for an illustration (or an idea for a personal piece), I go straight to text-based brainstorming. The idea here is to list out obvious schemes, relative passing thoughts, and seemingly unimportant tangents to arrive quickly upon clever solutions (but without worrying about visual aspects yet).

After accumulating a good number of connections between ideas, I start to sketch them out in a very loose form. However, in the case of a pin-up illustration such as this, I skip straight to the thumbnails where I can manipulate ideas that maintain a focus on the figure within the control of a closed composition.

**02 Preparing for thumbnails:** Next, I set up my document for thumbnails. I recommend working with one side at a minimum of 2,000 pixels so you don't feel confined, and provide thumbnail borders using the rectangle tool so you can define an exact ratio if desired.

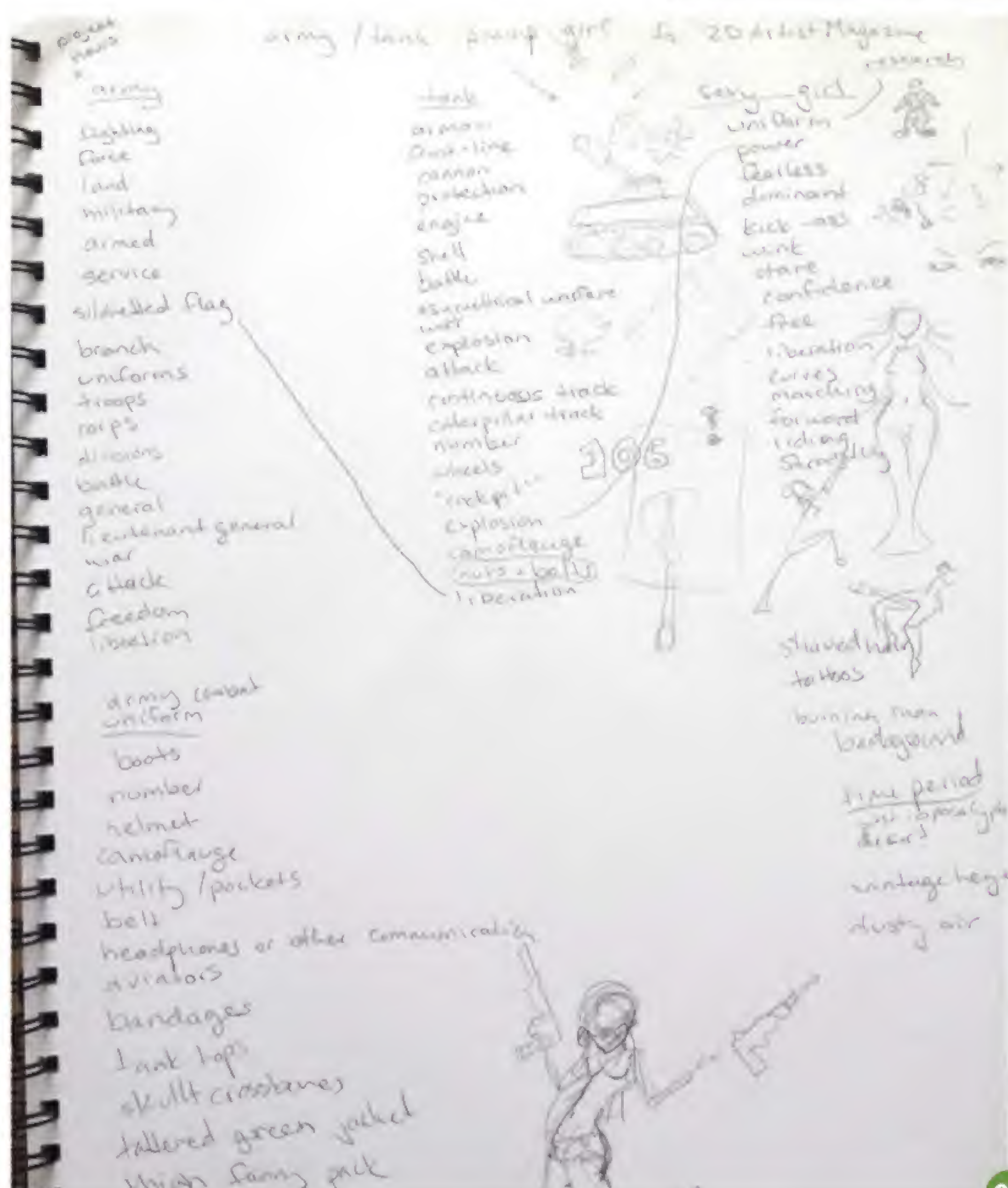
As for the brush, use any that mimics the feel of a pencil. Note that for this tutorial, you only really need a couple of brushes: a soft round brush (75% minimum diameter), a rectangular brush with some texture to it, and then something to sketch with. Optionally, you could also include a spatter brush. ▶

**01** Wordlists and icons sketched out help generate different ideas and concepts

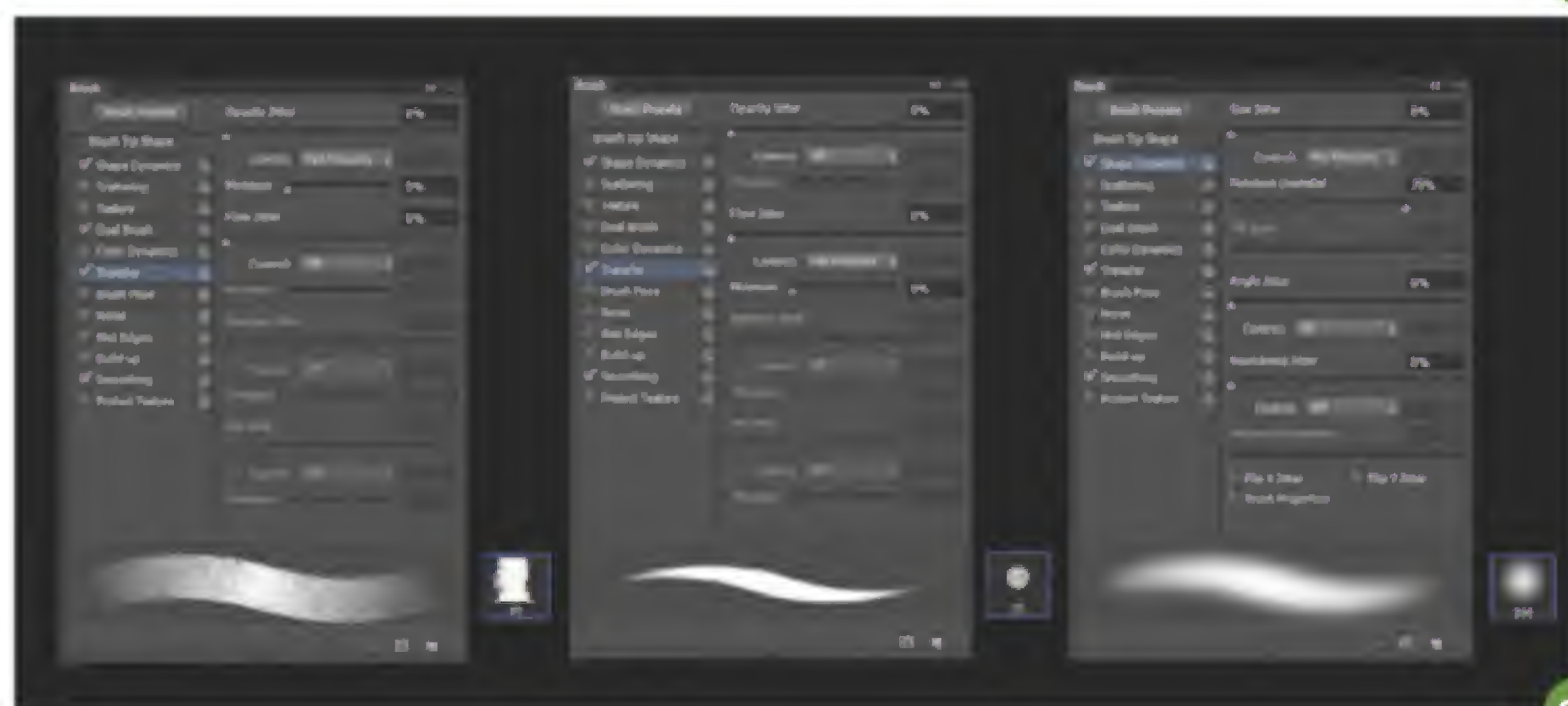
**02** A closer look at different brush types and their relevant settings



Beginning, middle, and end of the illustration process



01



02



**03 Create thumbnails:** Next, sketch up those ideas! Each idea should be significantly different from each other. For my thumbnails, I want to show the concepts I discovered in Step 1: liberty, confidence, domination, caterpillar tracks, cannons, and some obvious concepts like the military.

No damsels in distress for this army badass! Here, I aim for my pin-ups to be strong women with boots, tank-appropriate gear, and to resemble the same power of their tank artillery. However, let's not forget this is a pin-up, a celebration of the figure and its freedom.

**04 Review your thumbnails:** Next up, we add up our wins and count out our losses. Some of those thumbs just didn't fulfill the goal of a forward-marching prowess (i.e. thumb 1). Or maybe the idea is there, but the composition didn't match the concept (i.e. thumb 2). After some feedback, I settle on the most dynamic of the thumbs (thumb 3), and head out to nail down all the intricacies I feel will be important to the final image.

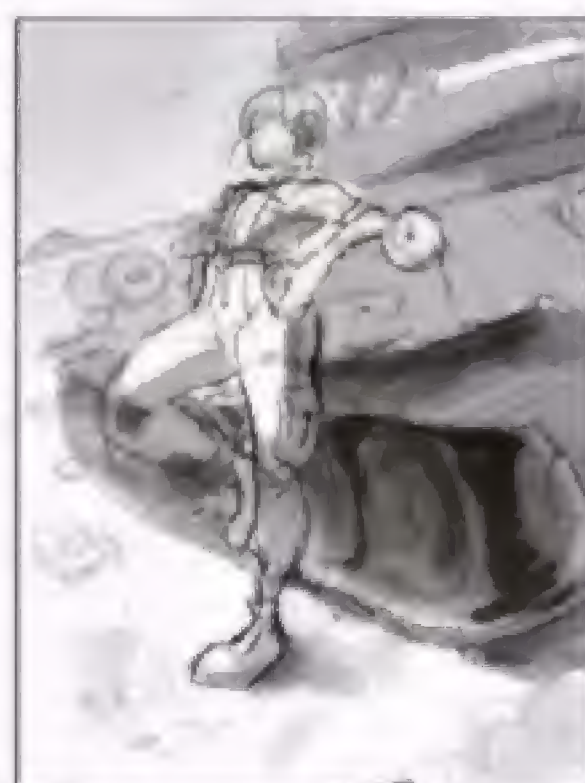
**05 Setup for digital painting:** First off, set up your document, then triple-check you've set up your document properly. Is it in CMYK or RGB? Is it 300 dpi? Is the pixel aspect ratio square? The only thing that should be different from your final image is the width and height: I recommend working at either 150%, 200%, or 300% larger than your final export size, unless your final image will be blown up to an extremely large size (like 20ft/6m). This helps ensure an appropriate amount of detail shows up in the final image.

**06 Create a tight sketch:** Here I copy and paste my thumbnail, and while reviewing references, draw out a certain degree of detail.

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### 50-percent is planning

Spend 50 percent of your project's time on Steps 1-6. Doing the mental labor to come up with a good idea or clever execution is going to help you make good decisions for the rest of your project. For example, should I put this band of smoke here? Is it daytime or night? Where's the focal point? These will all be answered by the message you want to convey which you discover in that first 50-percent of the project.

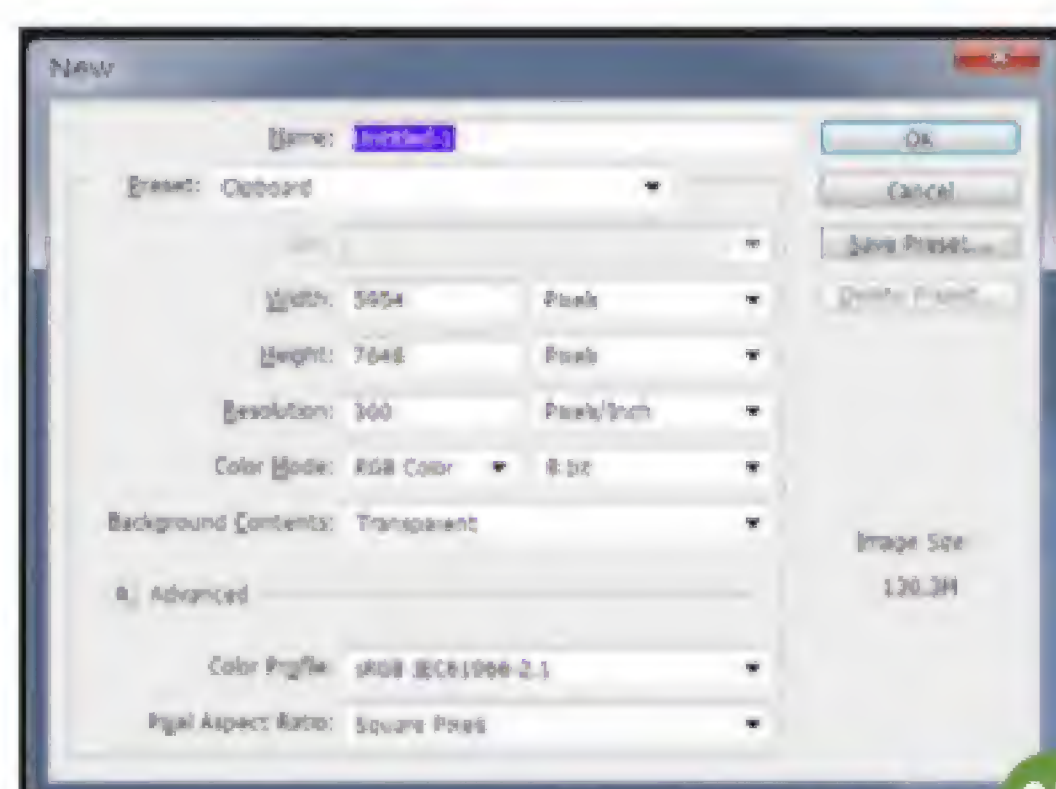


03



04





05

Although I'm not worrying about the quality of linework (none of it will show up in the final piece), I feel like effort put in here is problem-solving before painting. Anything you don't draw here will have to be done freehand with color, which can be great and is preferred when you're more experienced, but if you're unfamiliar with any aspect of the image (i.e. the which in way a fabric might turn or how the anatomy will feel grounded), do that work now. Problems not solved, like anatomy, will end up in your final.

## 07 Optional - set up linework for color:

I like to use my tight sketch for guidance while painting, but prefer to color it instead of leaving harsh black lines. To do this, it's easiest to set up the linework before painting:

- 1) Flatten your linework
- 2) Select All and Copy
- 3) Open the Channels window
- 4) Hit New Channel
- 5) Paste
- 6) Invert
- 7) Create a selection via: Ctrl+click the thumb preview in the channel layer: Alpha 1 (the new channel)
- 8) Switch back to the Layers window, click one with linework
- 9) Add mask

From here, when you paint on this layer (not the mask), it should color the linework only! ▶

**03** Four different thumbnails sketched out in borders made with the Rectangle tool

**04** Enlarged view of chosen thumbnail, showing the thought process before moving on to a tight sketch

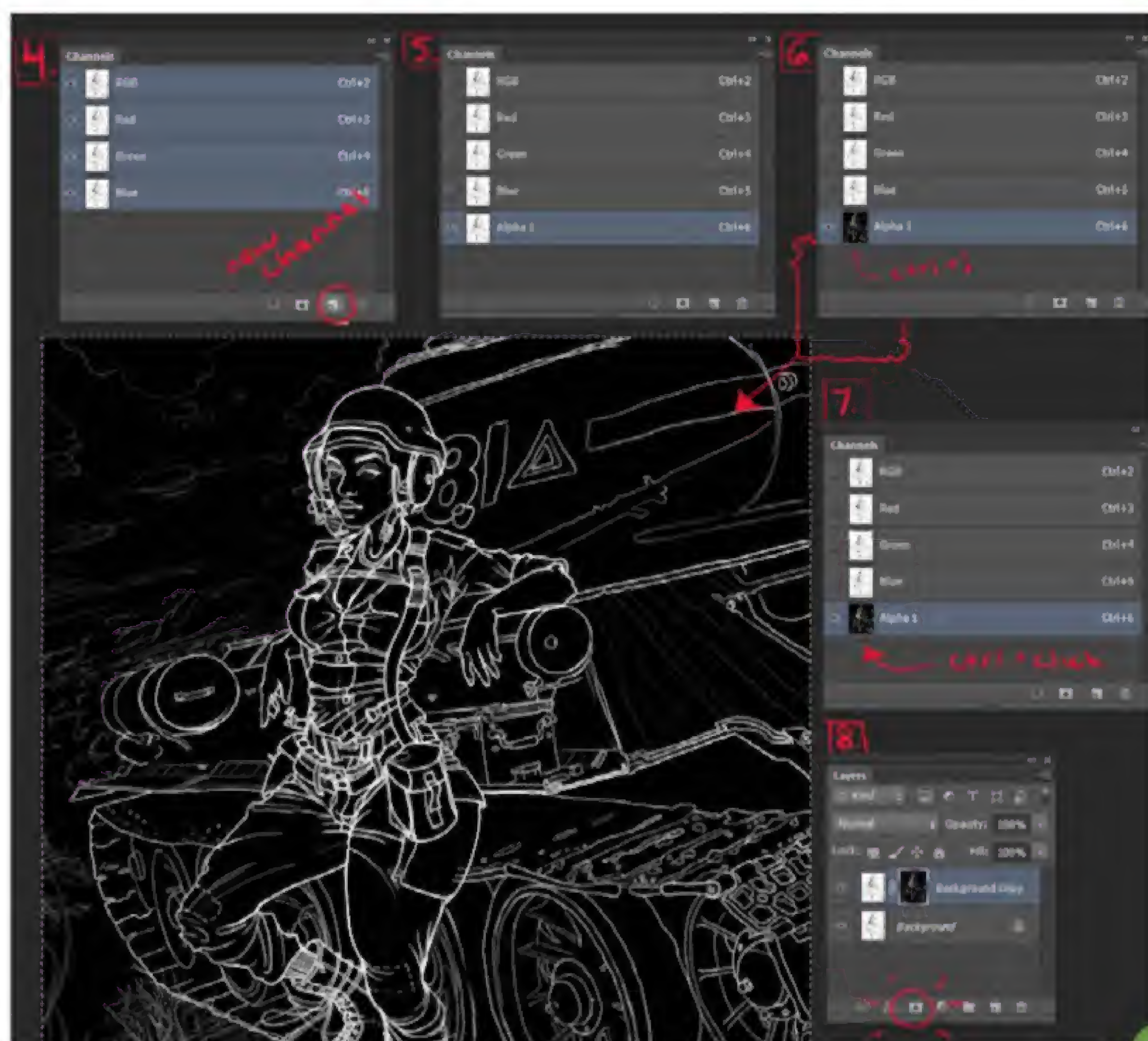
**05** A screenshot of the New Image window and image specs for beginners

**06** A detailed sketch in black-and-white to be used during the painting process

**07** A step-by-step description of how to set up linework for color

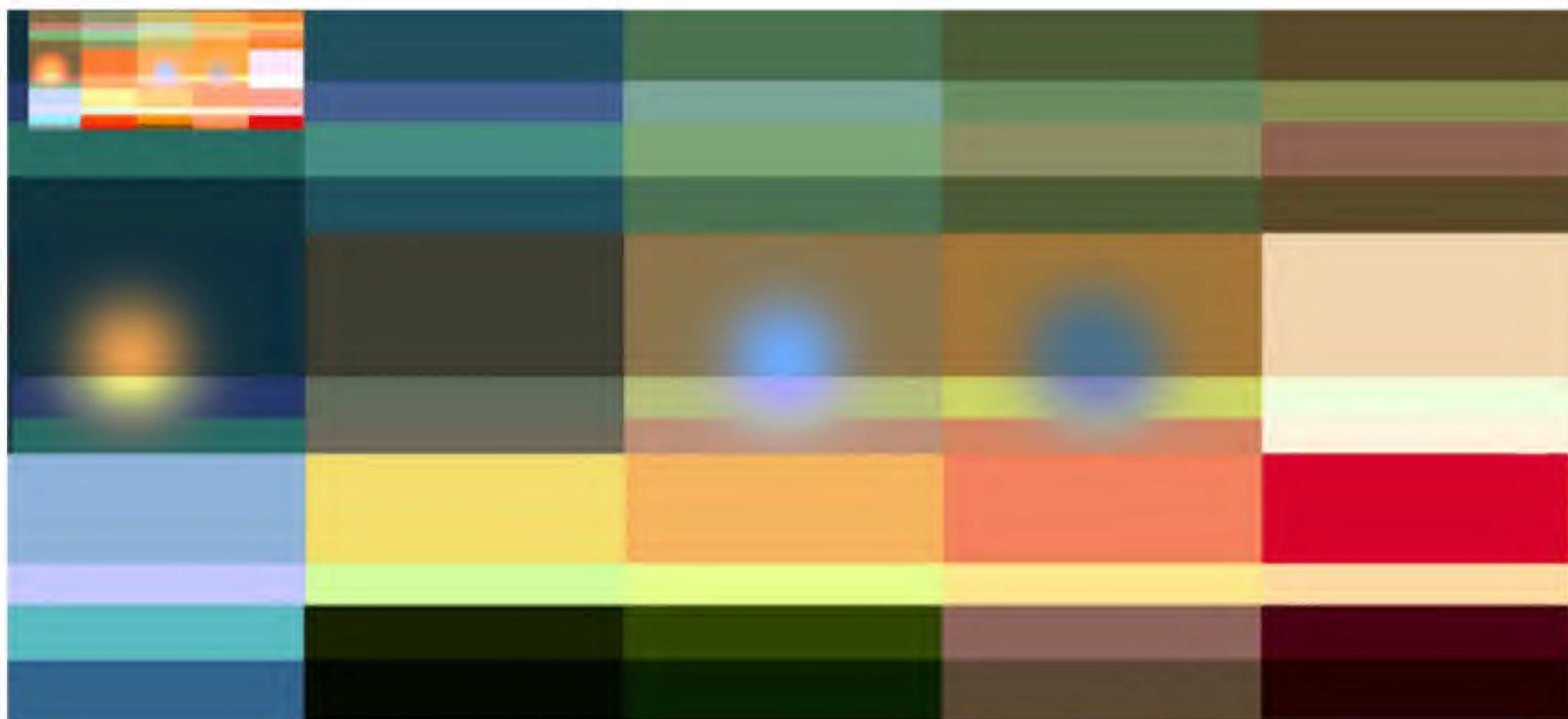


06



07





**08 Develop a color scheme:** You should consider providing a small JPG with a range of colors to act for your color palette. Although there are several ways to come up with one, I recommend including some colors that act as shadows and highlights, as well as some high contrast hues (i.e. if your color palette has a lot of desaturated green, include a saturated red). Though, don't feel confined to your palette later while painting, it is a simply a guide.

**09 Paint a basic background:** Now you can begin painting! Simply put, you want to lay down some color using big brushes and an attention to elements in the background. Give your piece a light source that you'll follow throughout the painting, show atmospheric perspective if applicable and try to describe large shapes. Keep it soft and don't use too much detail at this stage.

Also, try to provide accurate saturation and tone for the colors in the midground – as you start to paint the other objects in the painting, you'll want a comparison of how each color responds to those around it. Without an accurate midground, comparing this is difficult.

**10 Hint/Create atmosphere and mood:** Take a moment to check out your piece, and think about the other elements not seen in the image that you can hint at. Are there clouds? Tree branches? Another light source? More often than not, something will be before the foreground, and if it's possible to describe it in your image, it will help pull in the viewer. You can refer to the painting *Las Meninas* by David Velázquez for further study on this effect.







Also feel free to include some background details if they are behind your subject matter.

**11 Block in mid-tones:** Here, I literally paint in flat color with mid-tones only, of everything in significant size. If you're going to color the linework later, you can easily paint in-between the lines here by painting on a layer below the linework layer. If not, put some effort to include overlapping between objects (work back to front) with a layer on top of the linework layer. When you're finished, check overall color scheme before moving on to insure you've still got a palette that works together.

**12 Optional - color your linework:** If you want to use your linework once you're finished with the mid-tones, go back to ►

- 08** A simple image used to show the range of a working color palette and how some of the colors work together
- 09** The first step in the actual painting process: background painting
- 10** Making slight changes to show solidification of light sources and effects
- 11** Showing the mid-tones and flat color in the scene
- 12** Here, the linework is colored, so we can move away from relying on linework





the linework layer and paint the linework with colors similar (but not exactly the same as) to the mid-tones per object. Eventually all the linework should be painted over, but it's a lot less work to paint over if the differences between the linework and flat color/mid-tones are faint.

**Tip:** If you don't need certain aspects of the linework (i.e. the edge of an object), color it the exact same color as the mid-tone. Only keep linework that will help you while you paint.

**13 Painting shadows:** Next, paint the shadows for every single thing in your image. This is by far the most time-consuming part of the painting process, so don't be afraid to spend a lot of time here.

Also, for the most part, it's more difficult to paint shadows on highlights than highlights on shadows. So when in doubt, cover an area darker than keeping it too light. You should consider that all shadows are either cooler than the mid-tones or warmer for consistency (unless you have multiple light sources of different hues).

**14 Painting highlights:** After all the shadows are done, highlights come next. This is the place where you want to use your master-like painting control to your advantage, whatever is done here is probably not going to get covered later. Take time to include elements like texture, and pay attention to how saturated your highlights are. While your color choices for an area always depend on the surrounding color, be most careful here when deciding what tint to use.

**15 Final details:** Here is the fun part and usually the easiest. Play with the Levels, Contrast, Saturation, and so on, to highlight your focal point. Add the reflection in the eyes and give your most important subject matter a little oomph. In addition, you might be able to blur out areas that aren't as important, or give a slight vignette to your image to draw the viewer in. Lastly, save your file in a lossless file format, such as TIFF or PSD. ●



13



14



15

**13** Showing all the shadows in the scene

**14** Here you can see the highlights added in the image

**15** Adding those little finishing touches to the image

## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Color theory is everything

Choose warm shadows and cool highlights, OR cool highlights and warm shadows. Unless you have multiple light sources of different hues, this rule will help you make a lot of good choices when it comes to color.



## The Artist



**Kari Günther**

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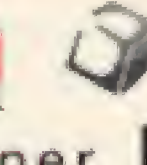
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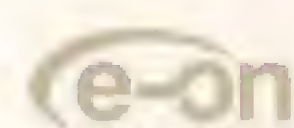
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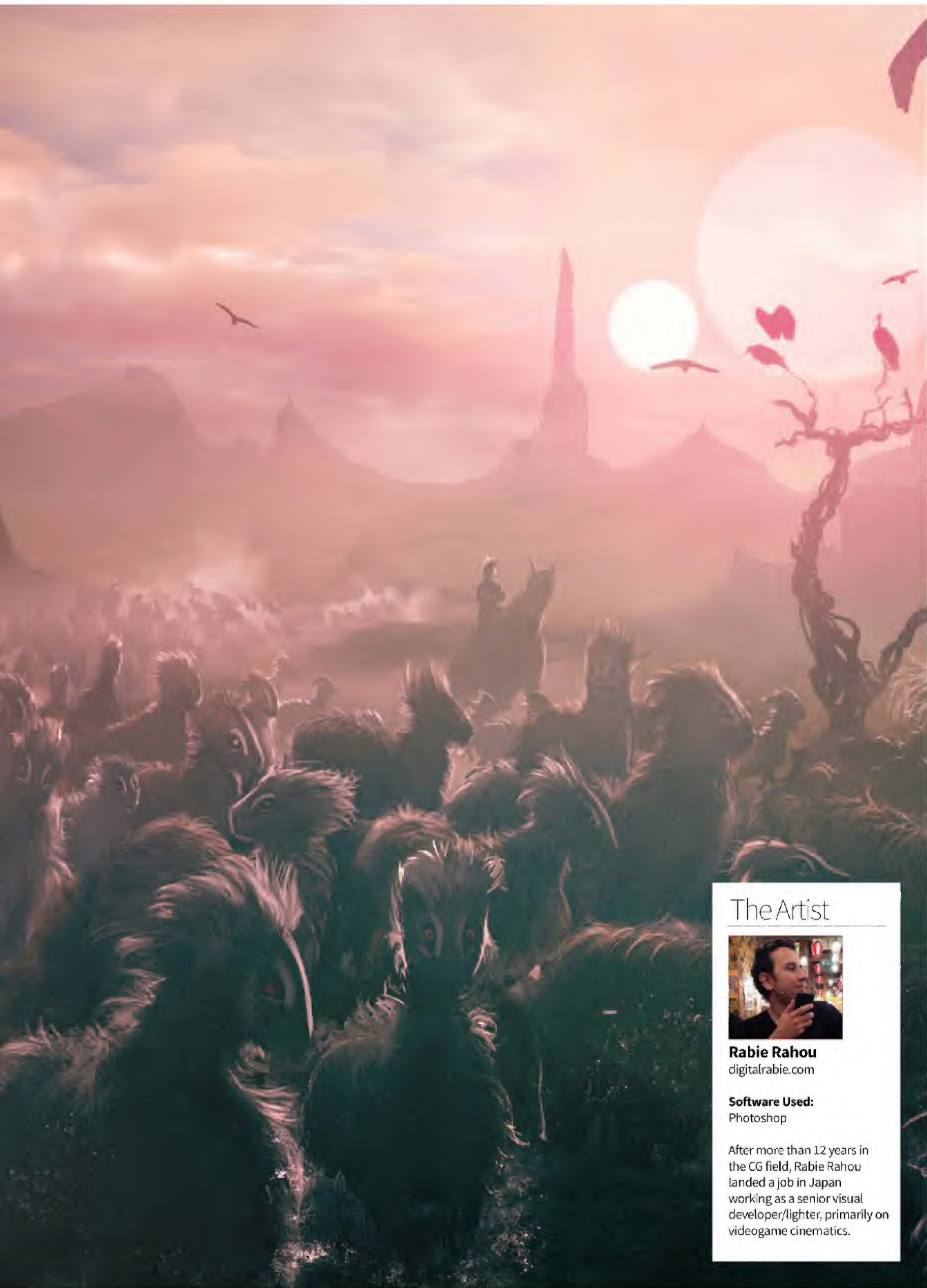
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# Create creature custom brushes

Rabie Rahou solves the problems faced when painting a large group of creatures. He guides us through this step-by-step tutorial, demonstrating how to create a custom brush to speed up the digital painting process [▶](#)





## The Artist



**Rabie Rahou**  
digitalrabie.com

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

After more than 12 years in the CG field, Rabie Rahou landed a job in Japan working as a senior visual developer/lighter, primarily on videogame cinematics.



## Discover how to make a cool creature custom brush to help paint your scene...

Depicting a herd of creatures in a scene is a really challenging task – even for professionals. You will face a multitude of problems in painting herds, both technical and artistic, and have to ask yourself a number of questions to create a realistic scene, such as: How do I compose a herd? Should I paint them individually or as a group? What is the best and fastest technique to paint a believable herd? How do I paint the environment around the herd?

Well, it's a hard puzzle that I'll try to simplify and resolve in this step-by-step tutorial.

**01** **Painting the main group:** First, I paint the main group. I try to add more detail in this main group, and then create some dynamic motion by painting them running toward the viewer.

I also don't copy-paste any animal – I try to paint each one slightly different than its neighbor by changing the size and perceived sexes of the animals. I paint the big leader with its mouth open, to make him more dramatic.

At this point, I find that I still don't have a good composition for the group, so I continue painting silhouettes to make the composition stronger.

**02** **Painting the big herd:** Once I'm satisfied with the main group, I start painting the big herd to complete the composition. I add two herds; one in the background and one on the left. Now I start to get some perspective and a connection with my story. Even if it's a complete mess, I start see some potential here.

I add a shepherd on a big creature which I still haven't fully decided on, and I complete a story



01



02





which is the migration of a big herd in another world or dimension.

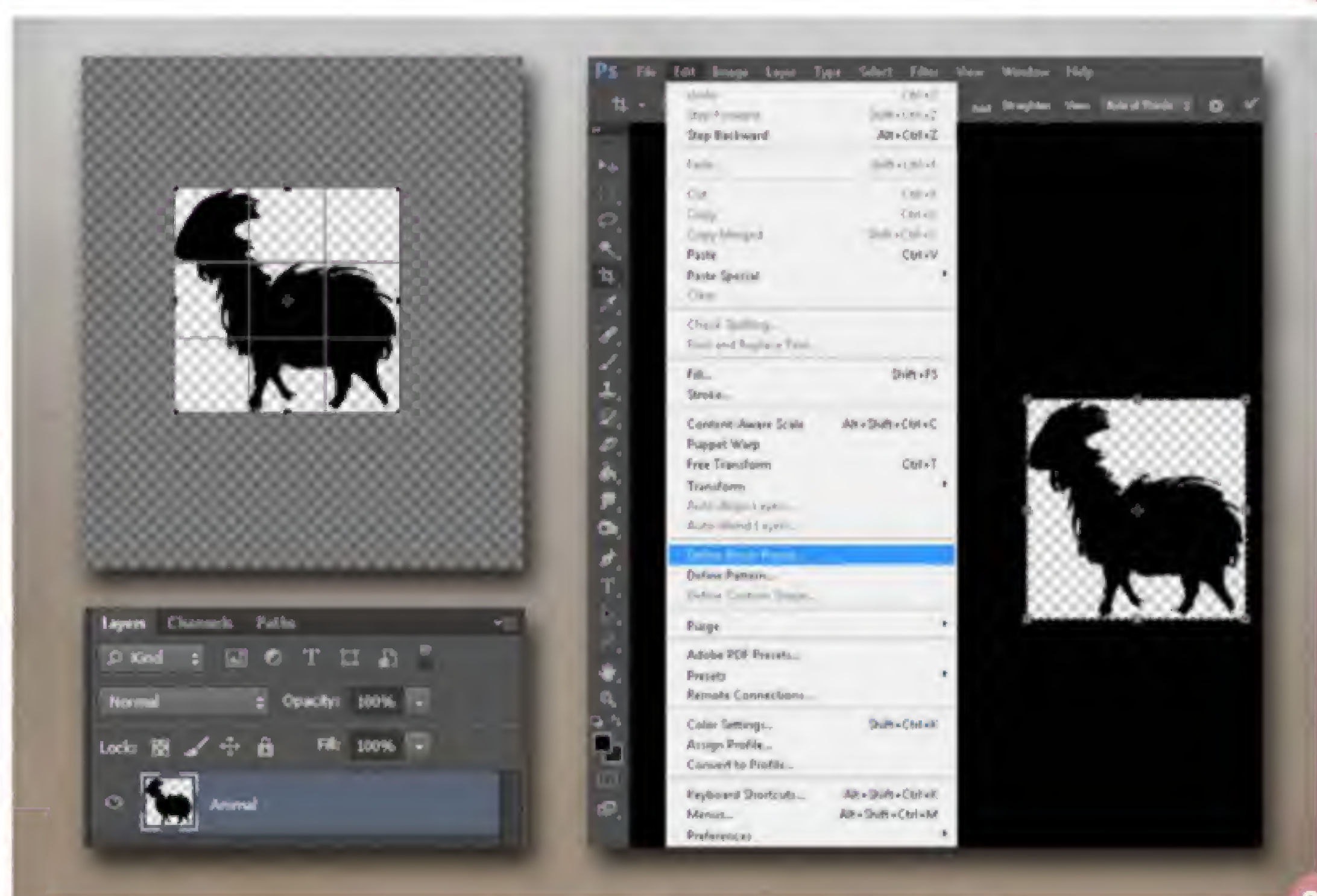
**“It’s a very competitive world for concept artists, and you need to be fast. You must know all the shortcuts and techniques to deliver good work in a short time”**

**03 Composing the herd:** As you can see I split the image into four parts forming a spiral – parts 3 and 4 are the most important as I choose to put the herd there. It’s not in the center but it takes the lion’s share of the image.

I leave part 2 for the sky, mountains and the atmosphere in general. But I still have no idea what I’ll put in part 1, it’s around 30-percent of the image and I can’t put just a big tree or some rocks in the space, because it’s a big part of the area. Whatever I add there must complete the story and add a value, not just serve as a decoration. I’ll show later how I manage to fill this space and add a value at the same time.

Next, I’ll show the techniques I use to quickly paint the two herds in the background.

**04 Creating the brushes:** It’s a very competitive world for concept artists, and you need to be fast. You must know all the shortcuts and techniques to deliver good work in a short time.



In our case, we don’t need to paint each individual animal in the two big herds. We don’t need a lot of details, so to gain time, I create a brush with a silhouette of the animal in the side view. The individual in question must be black on transparency.

Now I’ll show you how to use this brush to paint a herd.

**05 Setting the brush parameters:** I create three brushes with that same technique using the silhouette. I then turn on the Shape Dynamic and I put the sizes down, based on the pen pressure (small to big). Also, to have some variation, I turn on the Flip X jitter. Now I paint with a light pen pressure for the background and

**01** Painting the main group than adding individuals in places to make the composition stronger

**02** Adding some less detailed herds around the main group to build up the perspective

**03** Splitting the image into parts and giving the herd the biggest area. Don’t leave the other parts empty though as it will make the herd look small

**04** Create your own brushes to paint herds based on the main character









06

I add more pressure for the foreground. You can achieve a herd in one stroke.

I create two more brushes using the same parameters as the last one, though in the one I create last, I turn the Flip X off. So why three brushes? Easy, to paint a herd in a perspective you need lots of poses to simulate a direction and also to create some randomness and chaos.

Finally, to finish the scene, you should clean up the shapes and add the light manually.

**06 Using layers:** Here I change the technique of painting all the herd in one layer, and paint different herds in different layers to have more control and more variation over the scene. For this technique, you must turn off the Transfer on the brush because we need to have a solid value.

First, paint four herds in four separate layers and arrange them as follows: background herd, middle ground herd 1, middle ground herd 2, and foreground herd. Every time you paint closer to the viewer you have to increase the size to maintain the idea of perspective.

Once I'm satisfied with the composition I start to paint some light and shadow on the silhouettes, and put an atmospheric effect between the layers to simulate depth and wind. You have to master this exercise if you want to paint a big scene with large herds.

**07 Warm atmosphere:** Now I can work on the atmosphere. It's a sunset in another solar system with two suns, so it needs to appear hot and dry. I add some trees without leaves, like



07



08

desert trees, and some vultures to show the feeling of a hard landscape. You can imagine that lots of cubs and weak and old animals may die in this landscape.

Now because we are facing the sun it's a little bit easier to simulate an atmosphere – the rays from the sun will refract on the lens or eye, so it will generate a brightness that is not based on depth.

But I still have to paint a cold shadow, respecting the warm light/cool shadow rule.

**08 The second shepherd:** As I said in the Step 3, the first part of our image is empty. Now I've finished painting the herd I can focus more on filling this area.

I figure out that a big herd like this needs at least two shepherds on fast rides, so I add another one smoking a long pipe in the forefront. He appears very confident, maybe because he's been doing this every season since he was a kid. He fits very well in the picture, except I think that the beast he rides, a kind of big dog, doesn't look quite right

yet. I still have one day before the deadline, I must find what's wrong with this beast...

**09 The herd:** I add more detail to the image and correct the lighting and the shadow. I replace the shepherd's beast with another, faster, less scary and more original form. Finally I add a sky and mix everything together to make one unique world. ●

**05 Create multiple brushes with different poses and perspectives to achieve a believable herd**

**06 Painting a herd in different layers is a good technique to achieve a better composition, depth and shading**

**07 The atmosphere of our scene is mainly based on sunlight, by simulating the rays' refraction we can achieve a very nice atmosphere**

**08 Try to fill all the space in your image and add a value to your story**





## The Artist



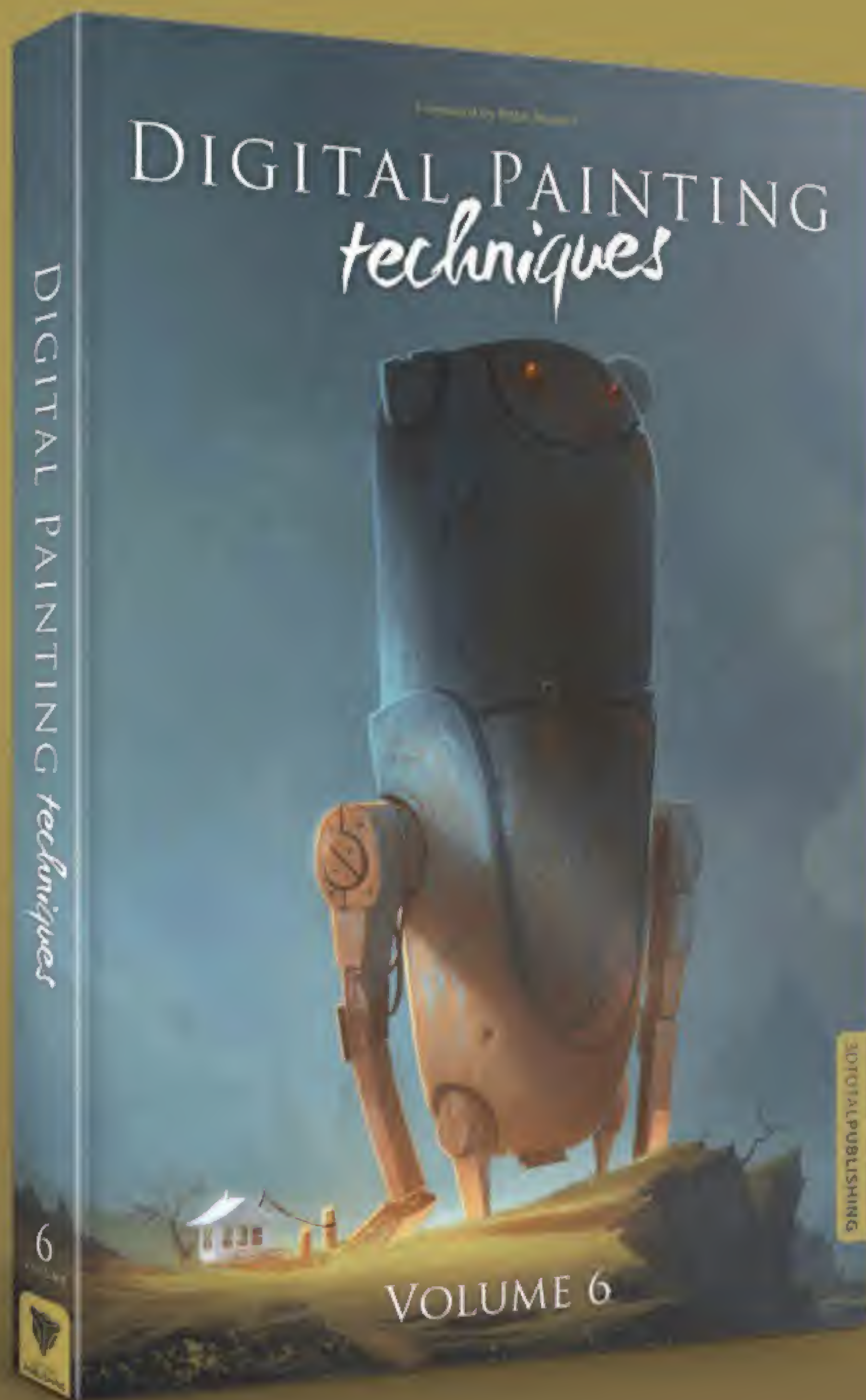
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# Build a scene with photos

Renju M.V. divulges the steps he took to transform the mood and atmosphere of a photo using digital painting and photo manipulation techniques ▶





## The Artist



**Renju M.V.**

[renjuart.webs.com](http://renjuart.webs.com)

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Renju M.V. is a concept artist and matte-painting artist. He currently works as a background artist at RockYou Media Group, Bangalore, in India.

*Renju*  
7-2014



## Discover how Renju M.V. created his realistic image *Hide and Seek...*

In this tutorial I will be describing my approach to creating a different atmosphere, mood and lighting setup using a stock photo.

### 01 Choosing the right reference image:

The toughest part of the photo-bashing method is getting the proper reference image. Most of the time I use a variety of different images according to the subject. Luckily, this time I obtained a proper reference from Shannon Hager Photography (easily found on Google).

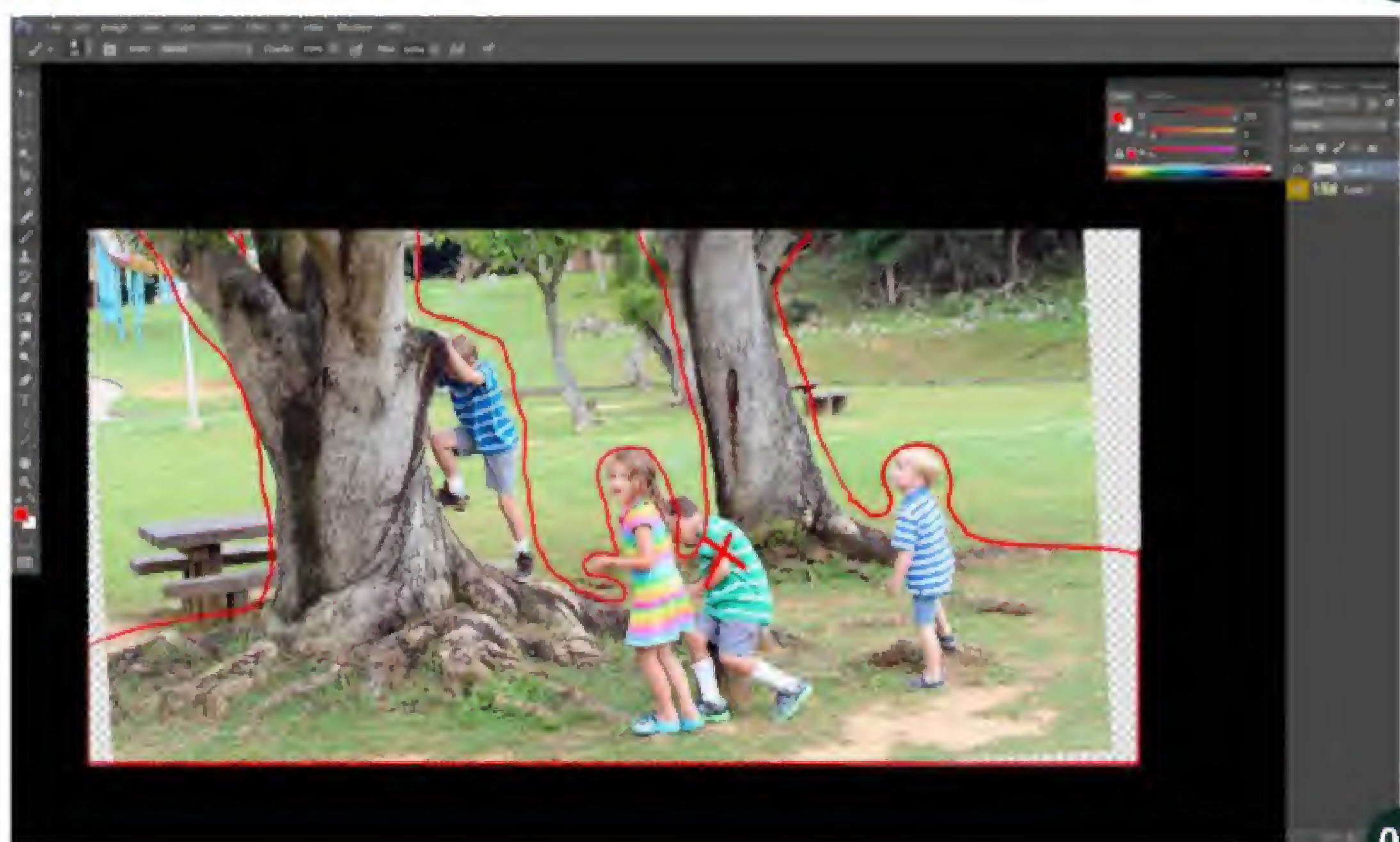
To start the piece, I cropped the image and fit it into a landscape view, and adjusted the image to give maximum attention to the subject.

**02 Marking the subject:** After setting the canvas, it was time to mark the main subject that I would be painting later. I removed unwanted stuff from around the scene such as excess characters and parts of the background, and added some more objects to create a more balanced scene.

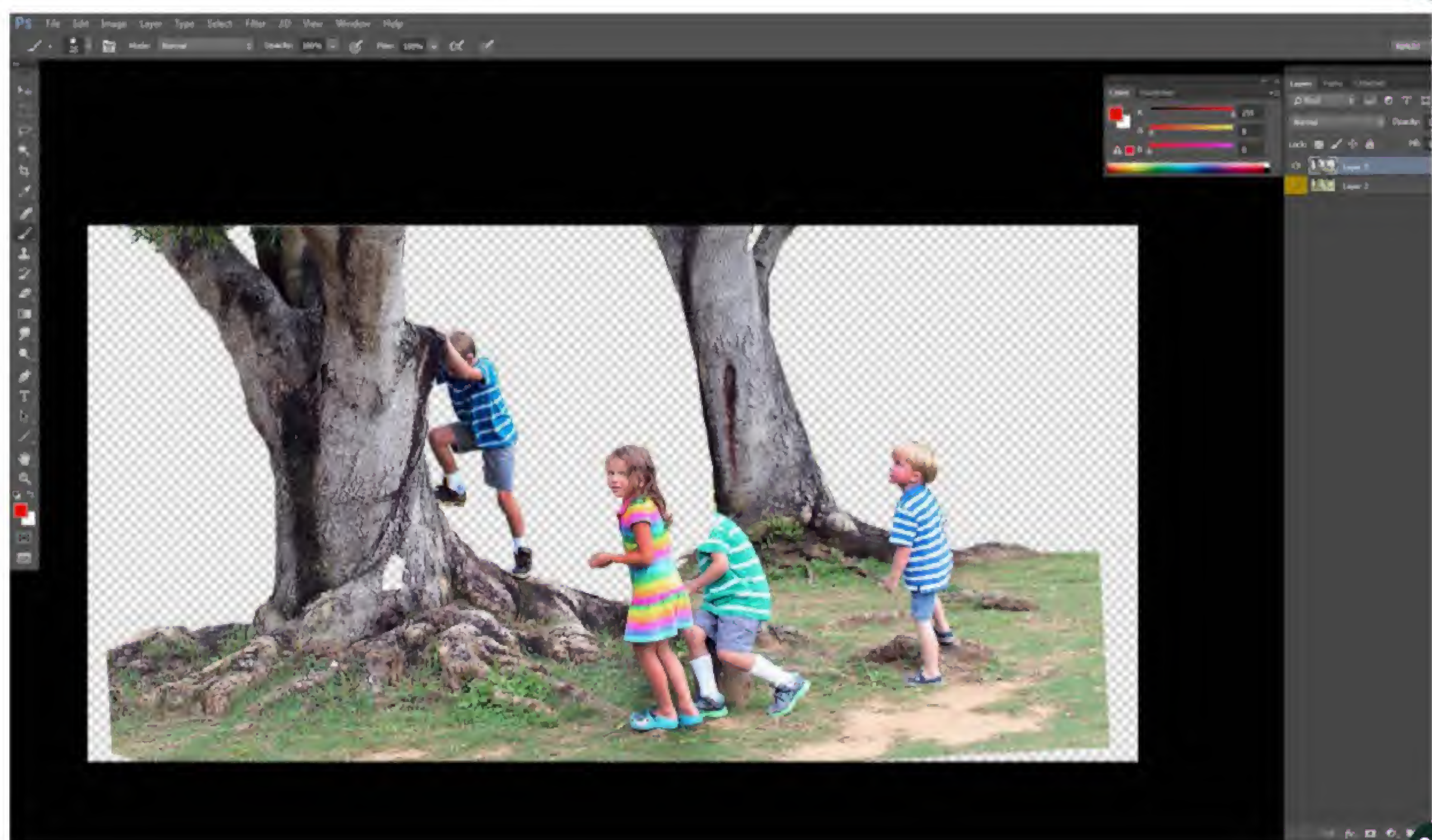
**03 Extracting the subject:** I used the Lasso tool to select the parts I wanted to isolate and deleted them, so that I could change the background later. The Lasso tool was great for selection purposes.



01

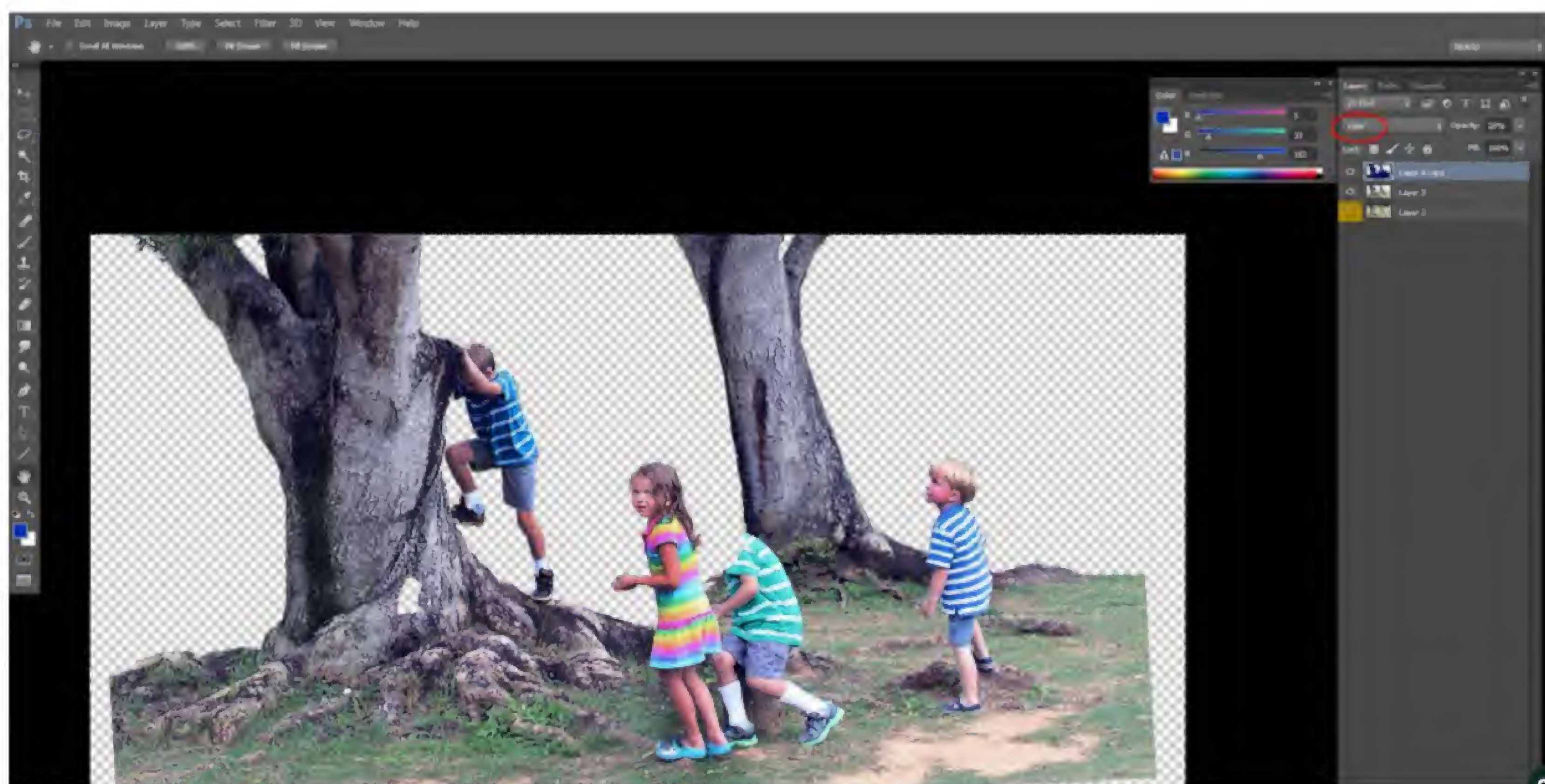


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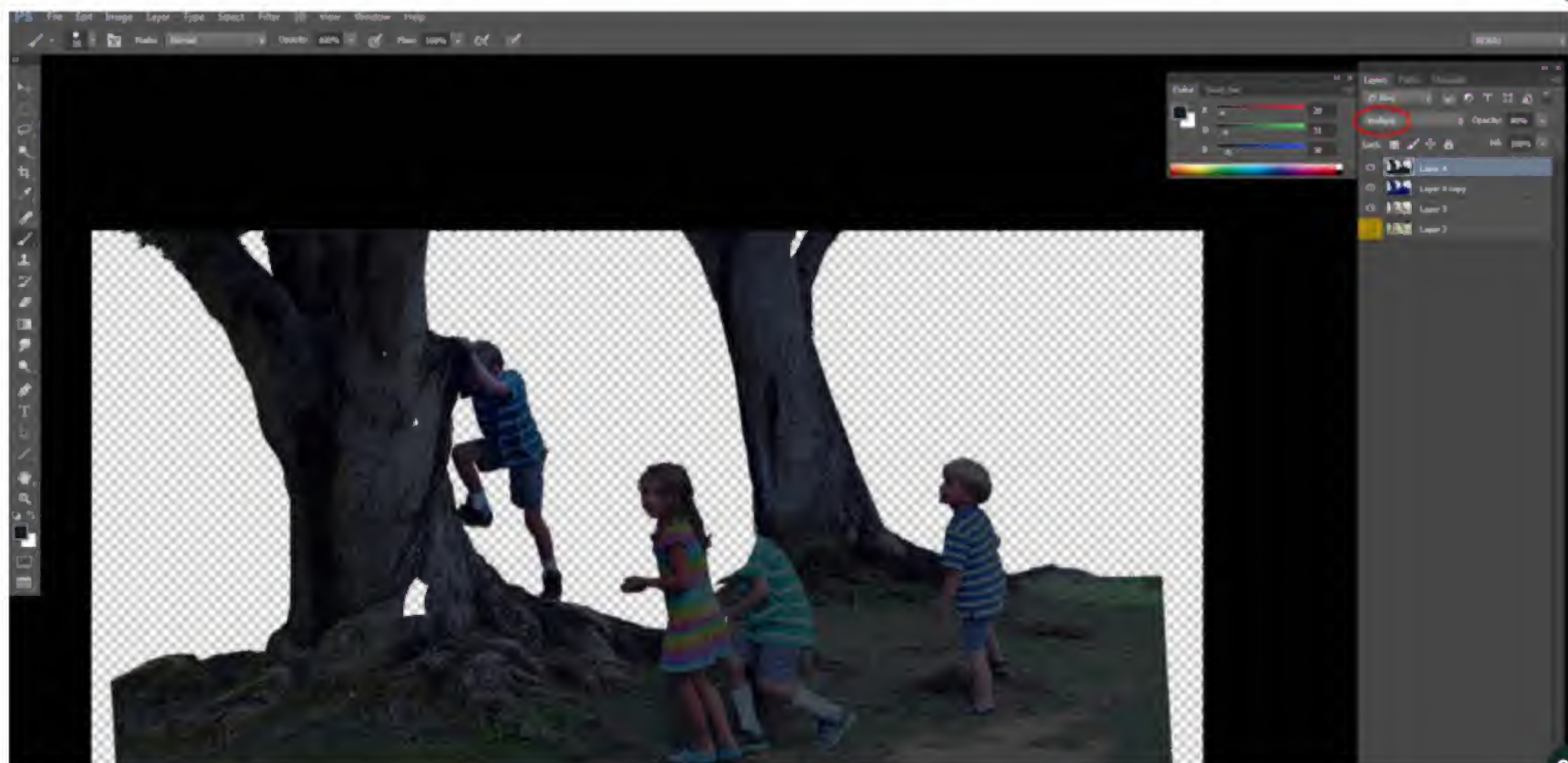


03





04



05

**04 Adding a blue tint:** I used a light blue-filled layer in Blending mode > Color to get rid of the vibrant colors in the photo and give the scene a cooler atmosphere.

**05 Silhouette check:** I duplicated the same layer, darkened it slightly and put it in Multiply mode to make it easy to read the silhouettes better. There was also an advantage to starting the lighting from a darker space, especially when it came to dramatic lighting.

**06 Working on the background:** The first thing to keep in mind when doing the background of your photo-bash is the balance

between the source image and the background that you are about to add. The basic things you should keep in mind are:

**1. Perspective** – You can't really change the perspective of your foreground, especially

when you have characters in them, so be clever and choose/manipulate a background image to match your foreground.

**2. Subject** – This was a fairly easy task because the main attention point was the children ▶

**01** Preparing the image by converting it to a landscape format. Image © Shannon Hager Photography

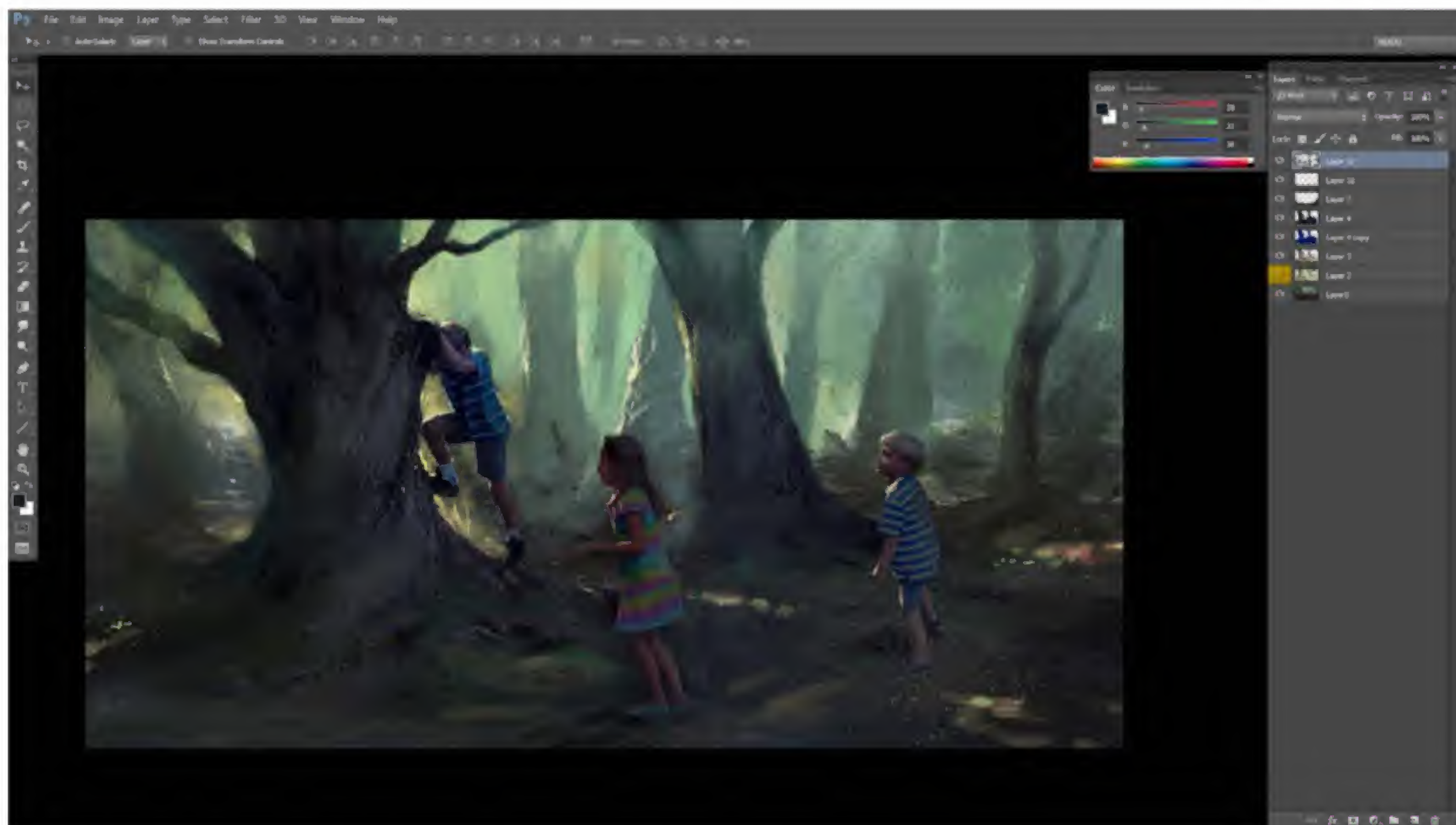
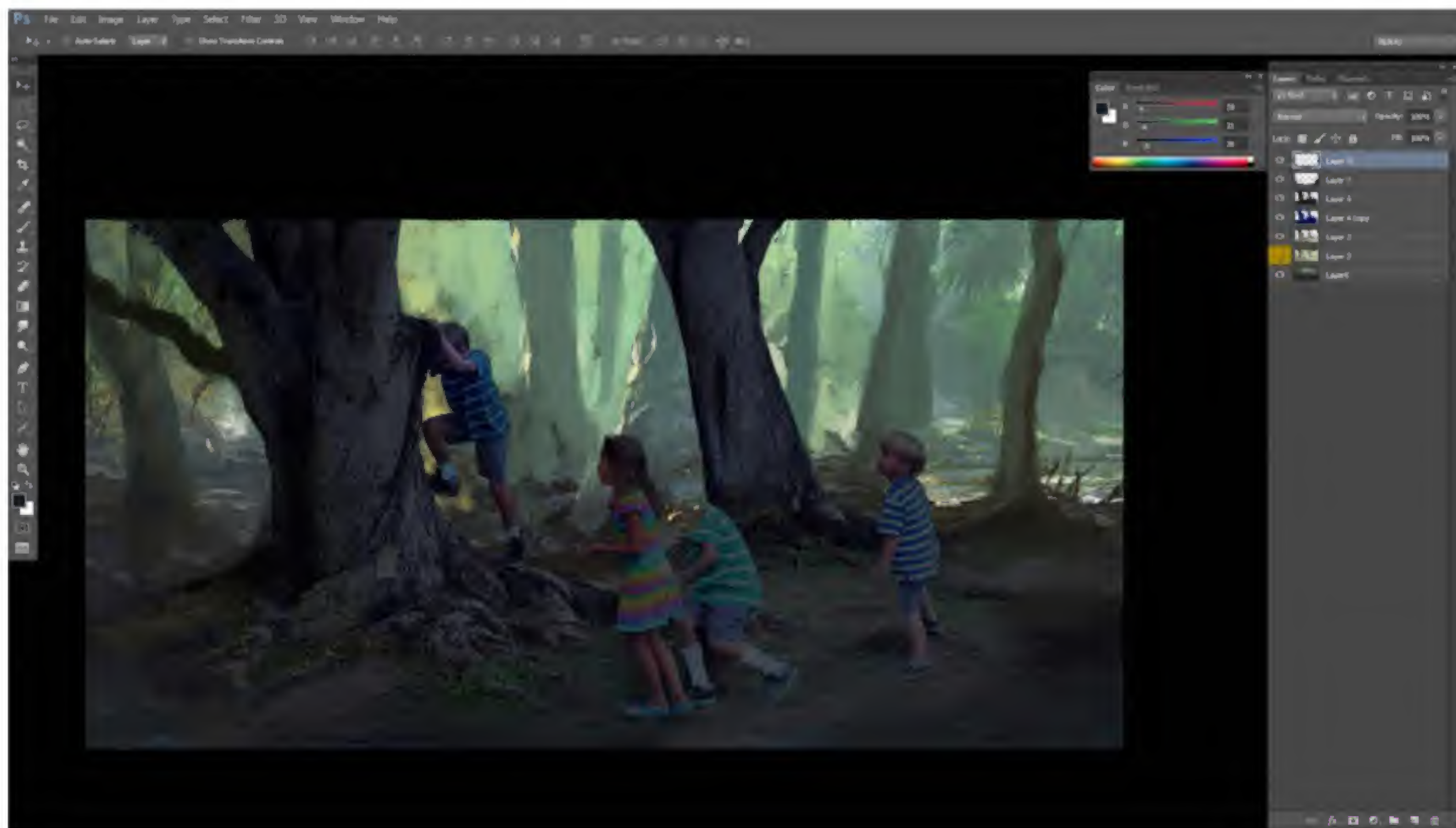
**02** Refining the composition by adding and subtracting elements from the scene

**03** Using the Lasso tool to select and delete areas of the image

**04** Changing the tone of the image using a blue blending mode layer

**05** Darkening the scene allows you read the silhouettes better





playing in the foreground, so the focus is already set. For the background, I also added some trees and vegetation that matched with the existing foreground ones.

**3. Lighting** – Matching the lighting of both the background and foreground is a must. As this is a forest location, it was hard to have a hard light source. Lights filtered through the trees created nice rims and gave a mystique feel to the composition.

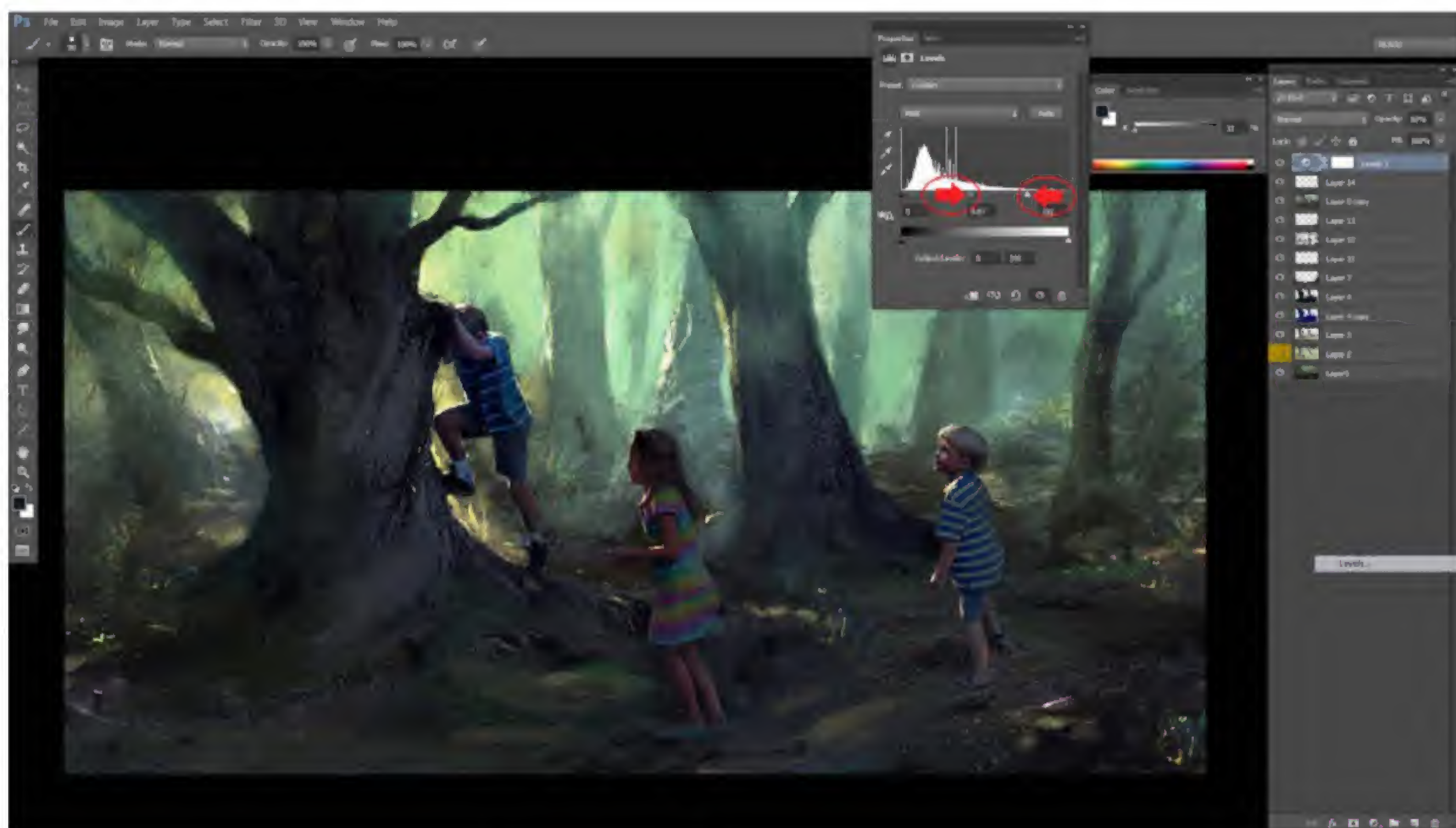
At this point I also changed the face of the little girl because it could be a distraction when she stares at the camera. It added a bit more focus to the subject too.

**07 Lighting the foreground:** I added a Level adjustment layer to make the overall composition a bit more vibrant. Adjusting the mid-tone and white point slider gave it some depth, and added prominence to the highlighted

areas and a generally more digital feel to the artwork overall.

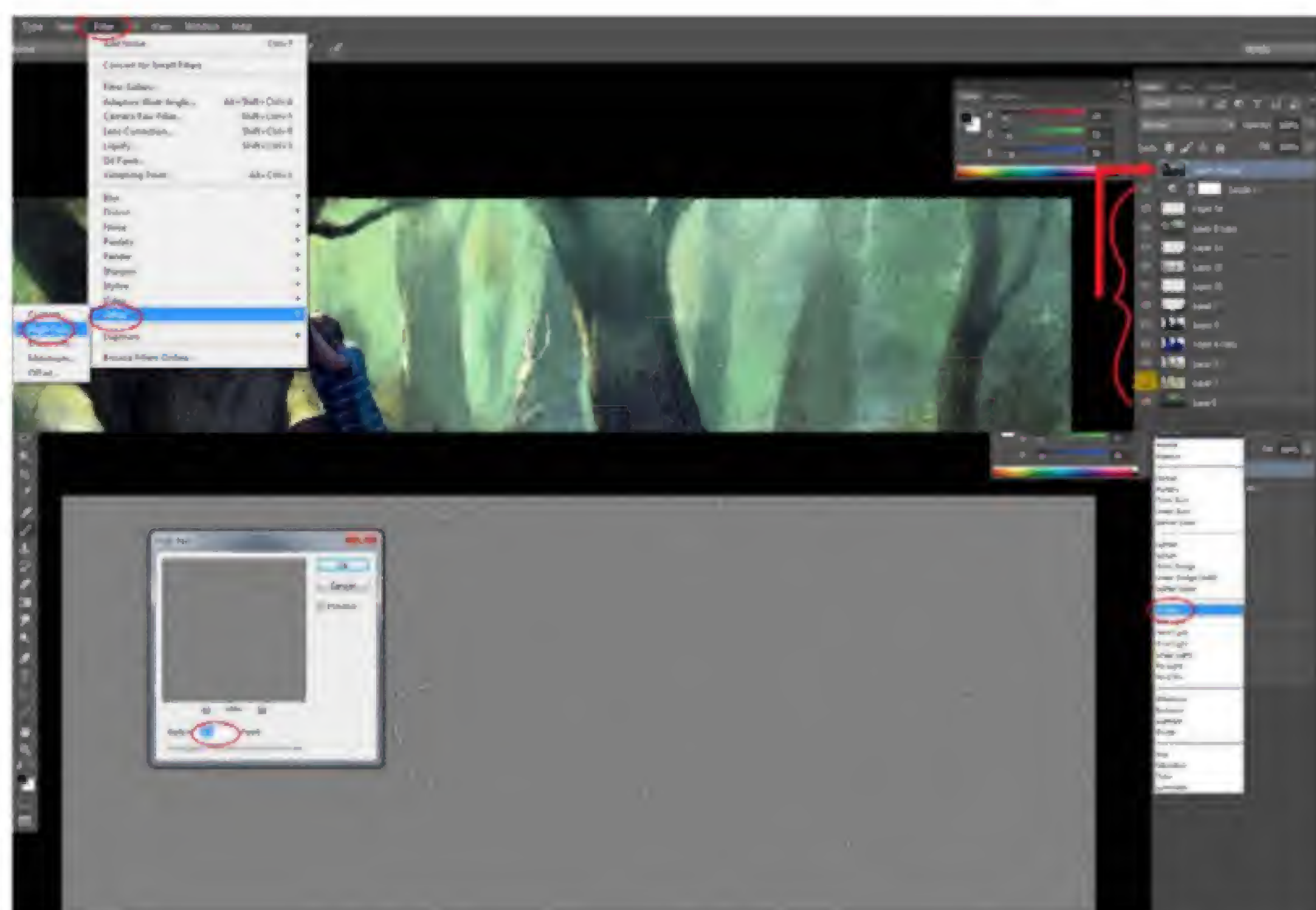
**08 Adjusting the Levels:** The final stage implied adjusting the general light and color, darkening the margins on the left-hand side a little bit, emphasizing the illumination a little, and making it a bit more dramatic overall.





**09 High pass:** I applied Merge Visible to new layer (Ctrl+Shift+Alt+E) and added a High Pass filter to give more sharpness and depth to the composition. (You can use this in Blending mode > Overlay).

**10 Finalizing the image:** For the final touches, I added a new layer in Overlay mode and painted in some light rays with lighter colors. I then added in another layer in Multiply mode and painted the bottom part of the foreground with some darker colors to reduce the prominence of some of the foreground elements. ●



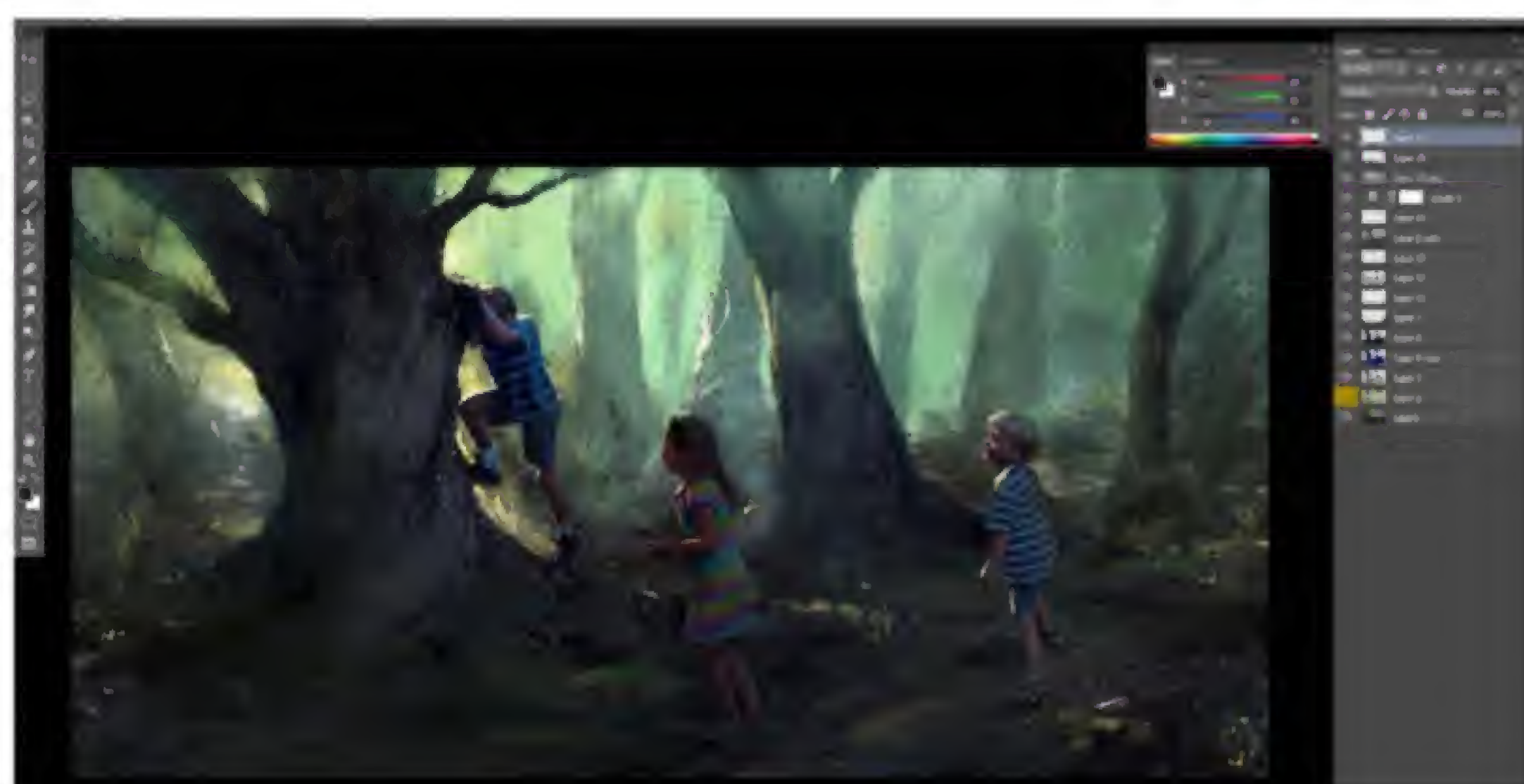
**06 Matching the foreground photo and background painting**

**07 Painting in a more consistent lighting setup**

**08 Applying a Level adjustment layer to add vibrancy**

**09 Finding the High Pass filter in the Filter panel and working with the High Pass filter**

**10 Making the final adjustments using layer modes**









## The Artist



**Renju M.V.**

[renjuart.webs.com](http://renjuart.webs.com)





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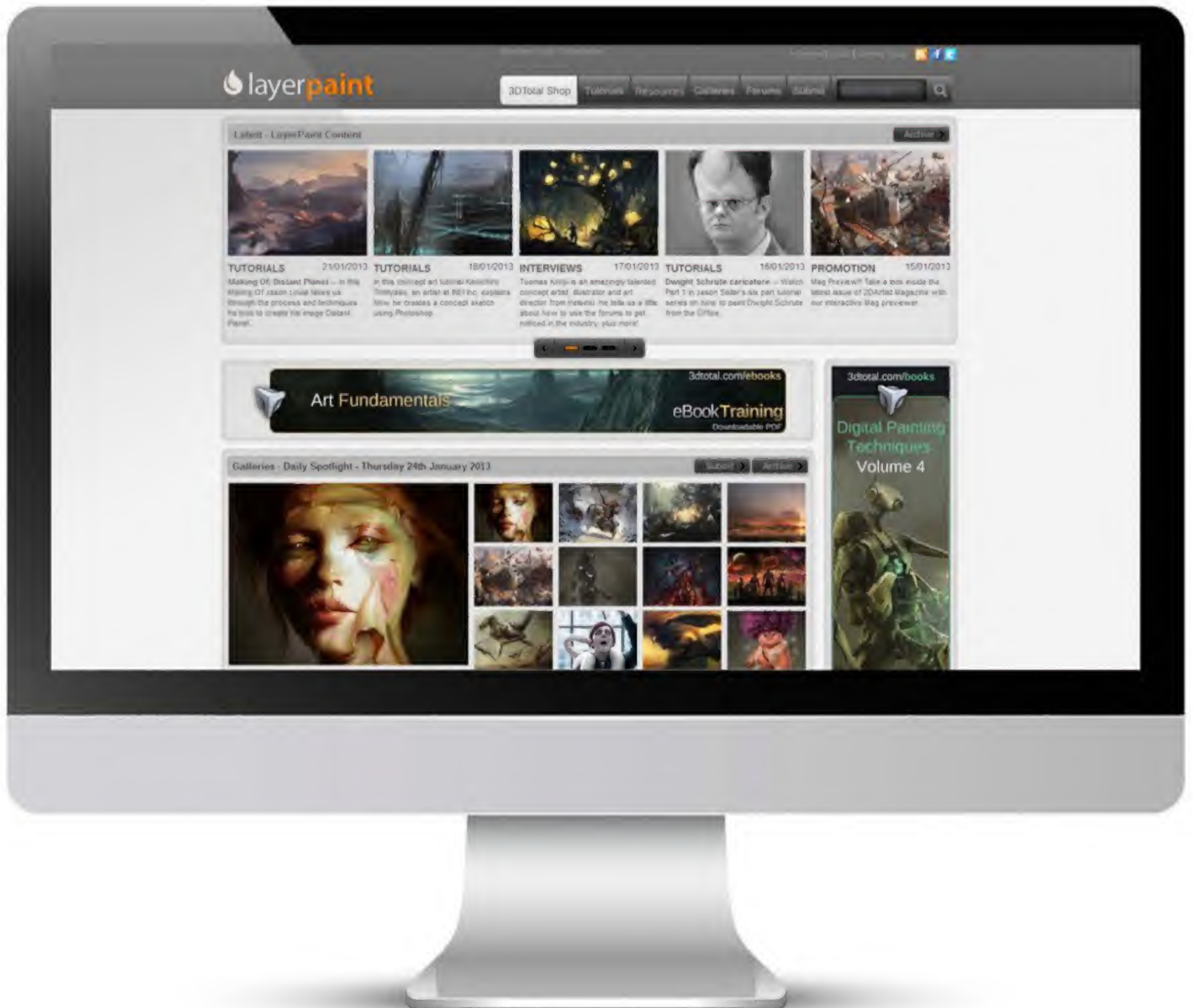
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## The Artist



**Fenghua Zhong**  
zhongfen.deviantart.com

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Fenghua Zhong is a Chinese artist, who is currently working as a concept artist for LOFCG school.

## DIGITAL ART MASTER:

# Juezhan

by Fenghua Zhong

Discover the amazing composition and attention to detail that went into Fenghua Zhong's conceptual piece, *Juezhan* with this sneak peek look inside the pages of *Digital Art Masters: Volume 8* ▶





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### Starting a new image

When starting a new image, my goal is to convey the mood that I have imagined into a painting. Juezhang is a piece I made for a Chinese game called Sword Heroes Fate. I was given a rough description of how the image should look. The idea was to paint an epic final battle ending a long, bloody feud between factions of an ancient Chinese martial arts society.

I started by brain-storming words and phrases that would fit the scene, like 'bloody', 'ancient vendetta', 'a corrupt imperial court's exploitation', 'faction's last resort', 'total annihilation' and so on. I then found a common thread running through these in order to find a story for the image.

The story grew into a tale set at a breaking point in society, where powerful, ancient martial arts factions have joined together to rise up against the corrupt imperial court.

However, the imperial court has exploited old vendettas between the factions to create internal conflicts, crippling the uprising by using their power against them. The image depicts the conclusion of the conflict, a time when the factions and the imperial court have put an end to all of the hatred.



01

### Color and composition

During the initial stages, I started to paint in color blocks to find the overall mood of the painting. I chose a warm palette of reds, oranges and yellows in the clothing and environment to create a sense of pressure and anxiety (Fig.01).

When painting the details, I varied the hues in the colors in order to age the objects like the clothing, to suggest that the fighters have been through many battles. Varying the hue, saturation and brightness of colors also makes the overall painting richer. For the background, I employed a cooler palette composed mainly of blues, suggesting the desolate, cold reality of the battle.

While in the process of finding the right colors, I considered the composition of the image. Since this was the final battle, the scene needed to be hectic with a lot of movement in different directions.

I used angles within the image to create movement and show the volatile nature of the battle (Fig.02). These also created spiritual connections within both the imperial court and the assembly of martial arts factions, who were now unified (Fig.03 - 04).

I also took the power disparity into account when deciding the composition. Facial expressions and body language show who is the aggressor ▶



02





03



04





05



06





07

**“In this image, I used the strongest areas of lighting and contrast to accentuate the subjects”**

and defender, while the direction of the flying guillotine (Fig.05) creates momentum and a connection between the two forces in battle, as well as guiding the eye of the viewer.

**Detailing**

I designed the imperial fighters as assassins, wearing light clothing and armor for agility and mobility. Their weapon in the legendary Chinese Qing dynasty was the flying guillotine, as it is agile and suits the image of an assassin.

As they are from the imperial court, their clothing is made of expensive materials like silk and is more uniform, demonstrating that they are trained professionals. The colors they wear are dynamic and restless as they are the shadows of the imperial court, masters of sabotage, assassination and open combat, employed to suppress the discords of the rebellion.

On the other hand, the rebels are amassed from different martial arts factions. I depicted this diversity by varying the design and color of their clothing and weapons, and the weight of their armor (Fig.06 – 07).

Once I had figured out the main composition and color of the piece, I considered the lighting. I tried to direct the eye of the viewer to a specific area. In this image, I used the strongest areas of lighting and contrast to accentuate the subjects.

**Conclusion**

I feel that there are areas which could be improved upon. The overall color palette could be more balanced for example, and the composition of the subjects could also potentially benefit from more balance to add rhythm. On the whole, I enjoyed painting the piece and learned more about painting light in busy scenes. ●











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